

## A Fickle Thing

Posted originally on the [Archive of Our Own](http://archiveofourown.org/works/36759070) at <http://archiveofourown.org/works/36759070>.

Rating:	<a href="#">Explicit</a>
Archive Warning:	<a href="#">Creator Chose Not To Use Archive Warnings</a>
Category:	<a href="#">M/M</a>
Fandom:	<a href="#">Harry Potter - J. K. Rowling</a>
Relationships:	<a href="#">James Potter/Severus Snape</a> , <a href="#">James Potter/Lily Evans Potter</a> , <a href="#">one sided Lucius Malfoy/Severus Snape</a>
Characters:	<a href="#">James Potter</a> , <a href="#">Severus Snape</a> , <a href="#">Regulus Black</a> , <a href="#">Sirius Black</a> , <a href="#">Remus Lupin</a>
Additional Tags:	<a href="#">Well yet again I have written a thing hard to tag</a> , <a href="#">You'd think I would have learnt by now</a> , <a href="#">Adultery</a> , <a href="#">Rape By Deception</a> , <a href="#">Identity Porn</a> , <a href="#">pureblood nonsense</a> , <a href="#">Pureblood Culture (Harry Potter)</a> , <a href="#">POV James Potter</a> , <a href="#">Bottom Severus Snape</a> , <a href="#">Top James Potter</a> , <a href="#">James Potter is a morally grey area</a> , <a href="#">Pureblood morals are interesting</a> , <a href="#">James Potter being a shit</a> , <a href="#">Sev would never if he knew who you were</a> , <a href="#">you know that James</a> , <a href="#">don't</a> , <a href="#">Why do I write these things?</a> , <a href="#">James Potter Has Issues</a> , <a href="#">serial adultery</a> , <a href="#">Pretending to be someone else</a> , <a href="#">Disguise</a> , <a href="#">Dubious Consent</a> , <a href="#">Dubious Morality</a> , <a href="#">Dubious Ethics</a> , <a href="#">Abduction</a> , <a href="#">Regulus Black &amp; Severus Snape Friendship</a> , <a href="#">Severus Snape &amp; Narcissa Malfoy friendship</a> , <a href="#">mention of eugenics</a> , <a href="#">Lily's going to gut you James</a> , <a href="#">Lily Evans Potter &amp; Severus Snape Friendship</a> , <a href="#">Or the ghost of it haunting her marriage</a> , <a href="#">Remus Lupin is So Done</a> , <a href="#">Young Severus Snape</a> , <a href="#">I mean it's also sweet and romantic in parts</a> , <a href="#">but not if you think what Sev would feel if he knew what was really going on</a> , <a href="#">Possessive James Potter</a> , <a href="#">Purebloods (Harry Potter)</a> , <a href="#">Lily would really probably rather go back to being Sev's friend but won't admit it</a> , <a href="#">James Potter does not do faithful well</a> , <a href="#">Sirius Black &amp; James Potter Friendship</a> , <a href="#">James Potter falls in love too easily</a> , <a href="#">Severus Snape finds his own cock boring</a> , <a href="#">Demisexuality</a> , <a href="#">Social Anxiety</a> , <a href="#">Severus Snape has social anxiety</a> , <a href="#">Eat drink and be merry mentality</a> , <a href="#">a bit of feminization</a> , <a href="#">that thing were someone's opening themselves up to new experiences</a> , <a href="#">and having a good time with some guy they just met</a> , <a href="#">but he's actually their mortal enemy in disguise</a>
Language:	<a href="#">English</a>
Collections:	<a href="#">Snape and Co</a> , <a href="#">Snape Snape Severus Snape</a> , <a href="#">Sheer Perfection says Mary Berry</a> , <a href="#">Marauders Redeemed</a> , <a href="#">Jeverus/Snames</a>
Stats:	Published: 2022-01-30 Words: 22,453 Chapters: 1/1

# A Fickle Thing

by [runrarebit](#)

## Summary

*It's gotten late and he's still wandering around Muggle London, because he doesn't want to go home, he doesn't want to be reasonable, he doesn't want to try and patch things up for the something-or-other thousandth time, he just wants to avoid her until he stops feeling like he's either going to scream or his innate magic is going to lash out and tear down the townhouse around their ears— and of course, because sometimes fate is a funny, fickle thing, he spots Snivellus.*

James Potter's marriage is failing- What a perfect time to disguise himself as a muggle, follow Severus Snape to what is either a makeshift dance club or a party for gay muggles, and then do a series of things he really should not do.

## Notes

TRIGGER WARNINGS: I'm not sure if I should add the archive warning for rape/non con(tell me if you think I should), but even though I haven't this still needs warning for *rape by deception* and all the dubious consent that comes along with it, abduction, also adultery, mentions of child abuse, bullying, Blood Purism, eugenics, homophobia, institutional homophobia, entitled possessive bullshit, denial of autonomy, social anxiety- I am sure there are more that I've missed, so please tell me if you think I should add any.

This is a very badly behaved fic. It was not supposed to be anywhere near this long, or wonder off in the direction it very much took. It was supposed to be James disguising himself as a Muggle and overhearing a bunch of stuff that made him feel bad about tormenting Sev, and maybe interacting with him and realising the Sev he's used to is Sev feeling under threat, not Sev as he really is. It was not supposed to be *\*this.\** I can't pretend I don't have a tendency to write problematic stuff though, so it's not that much of a surprise. Maybe it all went so feral because it was written in humid, mostly 30+ degree Celsius weather, and often to the delightful sounds of a jackhammer loud enough it felt like it was in the room with me.

Thanks to everyone who's been reading my HP fics, and thanks for all the comments and kudos! Stay safe out there!

They had another fight. *Another night another fight*— that's how it's starting to feel. He thought things would get better. He thought that after they got married the strange tension that would sometimes rise between them would fade away.

But things aren't better.

He's starting to think Lily actually *hates* him. Which is stupid, because why would she marry him if she did? Except the way she *looks* at him sometimes—

It's all bloody *Snivellus'* fault.

It's *his* fault she's unhappy. If he'd just kept his stupid mouth shut and never called her *that*, then she never would have had enough of him, so she wouldn't miss him the way she bloody does now. Not that she'll admit it. Stupid, really, because it's painfully obvious.

At the start he'd been glad that he wouldn't have to have Severus Snape in his life, lurking around his girlfriend— then *wife*— always waiting for her to lower her guard enough he could creep in and take advantage. Fucking *chair sniffer*.

Now though, now he'd almost welcome the little shit into his house, open arms, to make it all stop.

It's the *Sevs* see. *Sev said*— and then she'll trail off, a sour look on her face. *Sev did*— and then she'll trail off, a sour look on her face. *Sev likes*— trail off, sour look. *Sev hates*— trail off, sour look. Sev blah, blah, blah a thousand, a hundred thousand, unfinished sentences as she does her best to gore the boy out of her life, her history, even though the little bastard apparently took up *a hell of a lot more of it than he'd ever realised*.

He didn't really realise they were so close, but they obviously were, and she obviously misses him *fiercely*— but she won't talk to him about it— trying just leads to louder, nastier fights— and he sometimes suspects she blames *him* for the fact they're no longer friends.

He wasn't the one that called her a *Mudblood*.

He wasn't the one who decided that was a step too far—

Ok, he was the one dangling Snivellus upside down so everyone could see his almost everything, and then he did cast Scourgify so he was choking on soap, and then he might also have stripped off his pants, so nothing really was left to the imagination, and chucked him in the lake— But the breakup of their friendship is not his fault.

It really isn't.

Merlin's Beard— this isn't what he expected from his life.

It's gotten late and he's still wandering around Muggle London, because he doesn't want to go home, he doesn't want to be reasonable, he doesn't want to try and patch things up for the something-or-other *thousandth* time, he just wants to avoid her until he stops feeling like he's

either going to *scream* or his innate magic is going to lash out and tear down the townhouse around their ears— and of course, because sometimes fate is a funny, fickle thing, he spots Snivellus.

*Snivellus.*

He hasn't seen the little menace since school— Not even on any of the secret missions he and Sirius have been doing for Dumbledore— and here he is. In Muggle London of all places. Right when hexing off his head and pissing down the neckhole seems a really bloody appealing thing to do.

Skinny, as always— though his long, greasy hair seems a bit less greasy for once. Still long though. *Longer*, even. Dressed kind of like a Muggle, all in black— though the clothes are a bit more form fitting than he thinks he's ever seen Snivellus in.

Whatever he's thinking beneath the surge of irritation, he knows it can't be that good, that kind, that benign— he tells himself that the other man must be up to something. Is probably meeting up with some of his Death Eater mates. May even be going to kick some puppies and hex some babies right now— but he can feel the thrum of violence just under his skin.

Snivellus always has brought out the worst in him.

Of course he follows the man.

Of course he takes a moment to pull out his wand and dart into an alley to transfigure himself into someone that looks less like *James Potter* before he does so— Sniv sees him and the man will take off running or start throwing hexes before he can get close enough to— To whatever he intends to do. Whatever needs getting close for.

He keeps his height— because no way is he having the man look down his crooked nose at him— and he keeps his physical solidity— because no way is he giving up the advantage of being almost *twice* Sniv's width— but he lightens his hair into a mid-tone kind of auburn brown and makes it curly, shifts the blue-grey out of his eyes until they're just *hazel*, keeps his skin the same shade but adds a few freckles, and then rearranges his face so it's a bit— Well, still *handsome* but a bit less so, to be embarrassingly honest about his vanity. Just little tweaks here and there, for the most part— but enough little tweaks and he might as well be someone completely different. Subtly different eye shape, different nose shape, different mouth shape, different bone structure, and a little less perfect symmetry.

He knows what he looks like, is the thing, he knows he's the end product of generations of careful breeding, and he knows that *good looks* were one of the things his family was breeding for— maybe not as assiduously as for *power* or *good health* but looks were definitely up there. He's handsome, very handsome, in about the *blandest* way possible. His face is *textbook* handsome, without any of the interesting quirks than give character to Pads or Moony or even bastards like Rosier or Malfoy.

In a way it's a relief to make himself just a little *imperfect*.

The clothes he also keeps, because he's dressed like a Muggle himself, or dressed in the same style shared by both the Muggle and Magical world— no jeans or bellbottoms or any of the stuff Pads keeps experimenting with, just the usual smartly cut trousers and a shirt— in his case tie or cravat and waistcoat, coat, overcoat, or even jumper or cardigan left at home, as he'd stormed out. And, anyway, the weather's been quite nice recently.

He quite likes running around in just what his mind tells him are the clothes you wear *under* your robes, or when you're in the *Country*, because it's all rather freeing, more mobile, but his original reasons for the choice were in part because the townhouse where they live is in a more Muggle part of London, but mainly because Lily laughs at him when he wears robes at home— which, at first, was endearing, but now— Well. He doesn't know if her laughter has become crueller, more mocking, or if he just interprets it as such.

Snivellus is strangely easy to follow, because Snivellus doesn't seem to be paying any attention, isn't walked hunched over and wary, shoulders up, beady little eyes flickering about the place. It makes him feel sick. He doesn't know why it makes him feel sick, only it does. It seems *wrong* to see Snivellus slithering along with a kind of eerie grace, head held high, hips shifting a little back and forth with every step.

After about a block or so the noise— a kind of odd, background Muggleness— starts getting louder. Well. Part of the noise does. The part with a quick, driving beat beneath some Muggle woman's voice singing about something-or-other. *Music*. Muggle music.

He's seen various Muggle pubs and clubs about the place and wonders if they're about to pass another one— there do seem to be more Muggles on the street after all. Lots of men, he notices, and some women, and some he couldn't even begin to guess— some of which are wearing very sparkly dresses and very high heels— Huh, Snivellus seems to be heading *towards* the noise, not past it.

The noise that seems to be coming from a double story house at the end of a row just up ahead— *abandoned* he'd say, like quite a few in the neighbourhood— that looks like it's either hosting an *enormous* party or been converted into a dance club.

*Is Snivellus going dancing? **Snivellus**?*

Who'd want to go dancing with *him*?

Why, also, would the little Death Eater want to go dancing with a bunch of *Muggles*?

It gets even more confusing when another slender, dark figure peels off the wall of a nearby house and scurries over to Sniv— because, dressed like a Muggle or not, he'd recognise Sirius' brother *Regulus* any day of the week.

True, Regulus may be a little runty in comparison to Pads, a little shorter, a little skinnier, less broad around the shoulders— though, seeing the two of them together, dressed Muggle style, he can see that Regulus is still broader than Sniv, for all Sniv is considerably *taller*— Regulus still looks like his brother though. Black hair— not quite as perfectly *black* as Sniv's, but still black— and grey eyes in a handsome, aristocratic, *Pureblood* face.

He watches, somewhat aghast, as Regulus actually pulls Sniv down into a hug. ‘Thanks for doing this with me,’ he hears Regulus say, considering he’s ended up within hearing range, ‘I know dancing’s not really your scene.’

‘Rather dancing than creeping ‘round in public loos,’ Sniv replies, looking at the men wandering past a little uneasily. Everywhere around them people, mainly men, but some other people are greeting each other, pulling each other into their arms, a couple over there even *kissing* softly. He hangs back, trying to look natural, normal, in this situation, scenario, as if he is just one of these— *men*?

*Is this a gathering of— of— bent Muggles?* Do they do that, Muggles? Surely from what he’s heard they’re all too scared of their ridiculous Muggle law and ridiculous Muggle mores to have a dance out in the open, where they can be seen— Though didn’t Moony say something about it not being illegal anymore? Ridiculous that it was in the first place— *What does Sniv want with—*

More importantly, how can he keep listening without the man, and Regulus, working out that’s what he’s doing. He saunters a bit closer, trying to act surreptitious— but surreptitious is hard when he’s used to concealing himself with his *Invisibility Cloak* and he left it at home. With his wife. *Who hates him.*

‘You don’t have to do anything you don’t want to. You don’t have to let anyone put their hands on you if it’s not what you want—’ Regulus says in a tone that suggests this isn’t the first time he’s said it. ‘Tonight’s just for fun, just the two of us, *away* from it all—’ something a little bitter crosses his face, ‘My last night—’ he laughs, and it sounds more than half mad, ‘So *eat, drink and be merry, for tomorrow I die—*’

‘Reg—’ Snivellus says, long fingered hands reaching for the other man, his frown of concern only getting deeper as Regulus dances out of reach.

‘Don’t tell me to go to my brother, Sev,’ Regulus warns. ‘You know he won’t help me. You know he’ll *laugh*— He’ll think it’s all entirely my own fault. You know, better than anyone I suspect, that Sirius is a massive, irredeemable *prick*.’

‘A massive, irredeemable prick with *Dumbledore’s ear*,’ Snivellus insists.

Regulus snorts, ‘*Dumbledore*— Like he’d help a wretched, soulless *Slytherin* like me— and before you say anything else, I don’t see *you* going to either of them, and you and I are trapped in the same sinking ship.’

‘I think it’s rather more *personal* in my case,’ Sniv replies, sounding almost *sad*. ‘I don’t know why, but all of them have always *hated me*— *You* though—’

‘Have always been beneath their notice,’ Regulus replies, ‘Even Sirius could only spare a few moments now and then to tell my how disgusted he was with me.’

‘Be thankful he wasn’t using those moments to hex you and throw you in the lake,’ Sniv snaps, then sighs. ‘Sorry Reg. Sorry—’ he reaches for the other again, and Regulus lets himself be caught this time, lets himself be pulled close, ‘There just has to be a way out.’

Regulus shakes his head, 'There isn't. You know that, I know that— we're both in too deep. Cissa too—'

'It wasn't supposed to be like this,' Sev sighs. 'I suppose I was naïve. You'd think by now I would have learnt better than to trust anyone who showed any interest in what I had to say.'

'At least he's not like Malfoy,' Regulus says, shooting Sniv a rueful smile.

Sniv's face crinkles up in disgust, 'It's not much of a turn-on, is it— Someone wanting to fuck your *Bloodline*?'

'Be glad you're not a *Pureblood*,' Regulus sighs. 'Come on, I want to go in there and roll my sleeves up and dance away the last the last night I'll ever have two bare arms.'

'Reg,' Sniv says, concerned.

'Don't *Reg* me,' Regulus replies, looking sad and bitter and *sorry*, 'You can't put them off forever. You'll be next.'

'I suppose I—' Sniv begins, then stops, frowning at *him*. Oh shit, he's been *spotted*. Sniv's head goes up, long, lean body becoming automatically *defensive*, a familiar sneer crossing that ugly face, 'What are you looking at, mate? Huh? You got a problem?'

'Uh, no I—' slips out as his mind races, trying to think of an excuse, all of a sudden sure Snivellus will see right through him— and annoyed with himself for getting caught. That was an— *interesting*— conversation, so far. Who knows what else he could learn—

And if they were saying what he thinks they were saying— *Fuck, he'll have to tell Padfoot*. If Regulus really wants out of the Death Eaters before he's taken his mark— Merlin's Beard, Pads would *kill him* if he knew and didn't give his best mate the chance to save his little brother.

Also. *Snivellus*. If *Snivellus* wants out— *What?* Well, he could save him and bring him home to Lily and make her stop hating him— But would that even work? Sniv is *Sniv*. Sniv is not *cooperative*.

'I think *you're* what he was looking at,' he hears Regulus say, sotto voce, grey eyes amused and strangely *knowing*.

Sniv's eyes widen, and he whirls his head around to stare at his friend, absolutely *flabbergasted*. 'No, I—' the man blurts, at the same time as those same words slip out of his own lips.

Regulus keeps looking at him like that, like he's somehow *amusing*, curling an arm around Sniv's waist and tugging that long, lean form against his own body— making Sniv let out a little *oof* of sound— 'My friend here,' Regulus says, tugging Sniv against him again, 'Is choosy. So don't expect any more than a dance, and even then you'd better buy him a drink first.'

‘I don’t want a drink,’ he hears Sniv say, quietly, to Regulus, though those black eyes are fixed on *him*. ‘I don’t want to dance either— or at least not with *him*. I don’t know him. He could be anyone. He could be here to try and *bash* someone.’

‘He’s far too interested in you to want to bash you,’ Regulus says, dismissive, ‘Or at least not with his *fists*—’ then, louder, and definitely to him instead of Sniv, ‘Come on lover-boy, come in with us— If you’re good you might be in with a chance.’

*Wait a minute, does Regulus think he’s bent too? More importantly Does Regulus think he’s interested in Snivellus?*

He splutters, protests rising to his lips— before it occurs to him that pretending he is might give him the best chance he’s going to get to hear more.

Drawing himself up he tries to remember how to be *James Potter on the hunt*. James Potter going after girls— Not James Potter going after *Lily*, because she’d just arch her brow and look down her nose at him and sometimes *laugh*— but the James Potter of *before* Lily. *Everyone* had seemed to want to fuck him back then. Which had been convenient at the time, he will admit. *Easy*. ‘Alright,’ he says, trying for his old, easy confidence— but being careful not to seem like he’s flirting with Regulus. *Padfoot would kill him*— Sniv. Sniv’s bad enough, but Sniv he can manage. Regulus just feels *wrong*. He turns what he thinks is his most appealing smile on Sniv, ‘I wouldn’t mind a dance, myself. Or a drink.’ *Definitely* a drink. Merlin’s Beard, *what is he doing?*

Sniv *blushes*, dark eyes skittering away from his face as the man looks to Regulus as if looking for help that Regulus does not seem to want to give, ‘See,’ he hears the man say, softly, to Sniv, ‘It’s more than just your *Blood*.’

A bit of the old, usual Sniv fire comes back at that, a sharp look, *cutting*, being directed at Regulus. ‘Don’t be stupid, Reg.’

‘Ah, well fuck Sirius and fuck Potter and fuck your dad and fuck every last one of them,’ is the other’s response to that, the mention of his name making him tense up a little, though he tries to hide it. It’s confusing. This conversation he half understands and knows he wouldn’t be allowed to overhear if they knew who he was. ‘You’re *lovely*,’ Regulus adds after a moment, ‘And we are going to have a lovely time,’ grey eyes turn to him, ‘Come along lover-boy, a drink, a dance, and then I am going to go find myself a *fuck*— fuck what my *mother* thinks— so you need to be very good and very sweet and very attentive so I can trust you to keep my dear friend company while I’m keeping some company of my own.’

As they, all three of them, head towards the party the other two continue on with their conversation, almost as if he’s not there— or is possibly only there in a *decorative* capacity. ‘I’m not going to fuck him,’ Sniv mutters, turning to eye him warily again, blush deep and pink and almost *pretty*.

‘Why not?’ Reg whispers back, ‘It’d do you some good. Help you unwind— and he’s handsome enough, maybe not *Malfoy* handsome—’



‘*Ugh*,’ Sniv shoves at— at his *friend*. And isn’t it funny to think of Sniv having *friends*, but right now it sure looks like he does. *One* at least. ‘Don’t mention *him*. Don’t *remind* me of him. I’m still recovering from the *wedding*.’

‘Poor Cissa,’ Reg sighs. ‘A blushing bride and her husband’s off recounting his entire family tree to her friend in a misguided, and highly *Pureblood*, attempt to *pitch woo*.’

‘Fucking funny way of courting someone,’ Sniv mutters, all while his own head is spinning. *Malfoy*— Is Sniv really suggesting *Lucius Malfoy* is after him? Lucius Malfoy that just married Padfoot’s cousin Narcissa? *Narcissa Black*? Narcissa Black *one of the most beautiful girls* at school? And Malfoy would prefer *Sniv*?

Merlin’s Beard, he can’t believe it. Can he believe it? *Why would he believe it?* It’s not like *Sniv*’s that good looking— he eyes the other man in case he’s missed something. In case years of Sniv prancing around in front of his eyes and he’s been looking at something else.

Well— Sniv does look better than he did at school. Skinny still, *too skinny*— but not hunched over, as he noticed before, and *clean*— He expected the man to stink, for it to be noticeable the closer he got— like at school, especially after Sniv came back from the holidays. That sour reek of unwashed body was always off-putting. The greasy hair. The dirty clothes. The grime clinging to him— but he can’t smell him at all really, and the hair’s not lank and hanging in limp strands, and the clothes are actually in semi-decent repair. Black jeans. A black shirt. Black boots— not *new*, not as far as he can see, but not torn or patched or faded or stained or the wrong size— too short in the arms and legs and too wide around shoulders and waist usually— so—

The face is the same though, isn’t it? Long and pale, high cheekbones, that crooked nose, black eyes— but it’s not as ugly as he remembers. Or maybe it’s not contorted in as ugly an *expression* as he remembers. Sniv looks a lot more relaxed than he thinks he’s ever seen him, *wary* and a bit *nervous*, but not— Whatever emotion it is that makes the man, the *boy* back then, contort his features into that gargoyle like expression he always used to wear.

He actually isn’t *ugly*, is he? How odd. He was sure Sniv was. His impression of Sniv has always been one of—

It’s warm inside the house. Warm and *crowded*, full of bodies, people, *Muggles*. Muggles having a good time. Muggles chatting and dancing and drinking and kissing and— Well. *Grinding* on each other.

Again, mainly men, a few women moving amongst them, and some men in dresses, and some others that he couldn’t even place if he tried.

The air feels thick, heavy with blueish cigarette smoke— and some marijuana, from the herbal kind of funk hanging about the acidity of tobacco— and the scent of sweaty bodies, too much cologne— or perfume— and a hint of the stink of sex.

The music is loud and coming from somewhere deeper in the house, either a DJ or a sound system, but the sound of people almost overwhelms it, chattering and shouting and laughing,

this layer of sound smearing and distorting the one underneath, until the main impression he gets is of the bass beat throbbing like a racing heart.

The house is not in the best repair, the beige-pink floral wallpaper stained and peeling, and what used to be carpet, he thinks, grime trodden and threadbare. He still can't work out if it's a makeshift club or a party, but he can guess that whatever it is it's just going to get more crowded as the night wears on.

'How did you find out about this place?' and it's surprisingly *Sniv* who asks Reg, voice a shout to be heard above the din.

A shrug, and then, 'Unbelievably *Rosier*. He was complaining about *Muggle degeneracy*, and walking past, and everything he'd *seen*— and I thought *I might like a bit of that for myself*—' his head bobs for a moment, catching the rhythm of the music as more Muggles squeeze in past them, then he adds, 'Cissa would have loved this. A night out without everyone treating her like she's a walking *womb*.'

'Don't talk about her like she's dead,' Sniv admonishes.

'She might as well be. Married to *Malfoy*,' the two of them seem stuck on the topic of the Malfoy heir— though from what he's heard they probably have reason to be. Odd. So *odd*. 'At least after he's finished bothering her for an heir— and maybe a spare— he won't bother her again.'

'He'll probably go back to trying to bother *me* instead,' Sniv moans.

'You've never thought about it?' Regulus shoots him a wicked look.

Sniv's face scrunches up, 'What? Spending what few years I've got left with what few looks I ever had as Malfoy's bloody *catamite*?'

Regulus shrugs, '*Companion* I think he'd term it.'

'It's not my bloody *company* he wants,' Sniv snaps. 'He doesn't give a shit what I think or what I say or what my interests are. It's not even *me* he really wants to fuck— I mean, *look at me*— It's just a *name*, just whatever nonsense your lot— *sorry Reg*— ascribe to whatever's passed down from parent to child. It's just my *blood*— and it's bloody *insulting*, and there's no way on God's green earth I'm that bloody *desperate*.'

*Blood. Blood. Blood*— Why do they keep bringing it up? He wonders as they move deeper into the house, Regulus peering about the place curiously, Sniv more cautiously— *Wow there are a lot of half-naked men in here*— He knows Snivellus is a Halfblood, so it can't be the *Muggle* half that's whet Malfoy's appetite, if something indeed has, so it has to be the other side— Probably the mother, as he's not heard of a Wizarding family by the name of *Snape*— but he has no idea what the mother's maiden name is and why it would be of interest to a Pureblood Blood Purist as— *rank obsessed*— as Malfoy. None of the great families have claimed Sniv as one of theirs as far as he knows, so—

‘He’d set you up nicely though,’ Regulus says, spotting someone that looks like they’re selling drinks behind a makeshift bar that was once two short teak bookshelves and a long plank, and starting to head over, squeezing through the crowd and still shouting to Sniv as he does. They, both him and Sniv, follow after, crowing in close to Regulus as if they’re all somehow *friends* afraid to get separated by the flow and press of people. ‘Your own flat, a new wardrobe, all the expensive Potions equipment your little heart could desire, an *Apprenticeship* organised for you so you didn’t have to rely on our *Lord and Master’s* favour —’

‘And all it would take is me on my belly moaning about what a big, strong man he is with a big, strong *cock*—’ Sniv replies with brutal sarcasm, the last word bitten off in a way that makes him almost flinch away, the urge to protectively cover his own cock briefly swelling in him. Merlin’s Beard, he’s never heard Sniv say anything like that before. Rarely heard him swear at school, though he hardly seems to be afraid of doing so out of it, but *cock*— for all he might try and think of Sniv as a chair sniffer, some dirty little pervert chasing after Lily, he really has never come off as much of a sexual animal. No girlfriends— though, considering where they are, there’s probably an explanation for that— but also, as far as he knows, no *boyfriends*. Homosexual relationships aren’t unheard of at school, even if most break them off when they graduate and go off to get married. But there was never so much as a *whisper* of Sniv getting on his knees for *anyone*. But he can still say *cock*. Cock. C-O-C-K— It makes him feel— *Something*. While he’s contemplating what that something might be Sniv continues with, ‘I mean, personality wise he may be miles better than *Potter*—’ *Oi*, he thinks, but doesn’t say. *He’s loads better than Malfoy*— ‘—Or your— *sorry Reg*—’ that was probably *brother* Sniv had the discretion not to say, Pads, Padfoot, Sirius Black— He can’t even bring himself to be offended for his friend. They have kind of been pricks to Sniv— not that he didn’t deserve it, but— But he’s offended for himself but not Sirius, when he’s been just as bad, if not worse— Well. Well— there was that incident with Moony, but— *but*— ‘But that’s a pretty low bar, if you know what I mean?’ *Oi*, again. ‘He’s not *ugly*, I suppose, but— You know me, Reg. You know I couldn’t— I mean, I can’t imagine how *Cissa* can, or any of you, for that matter— But I’m just not— I’m not made like that, you know? I can’t just— not with just *anyone*.’

‘It’s not in the making, it’s in the *training*—’ Regulus responds, airily. True that. As a Pureblood it really is a lifetime of expecting one day you’ll get married— probably to whoever your parents chose— and one day you’ll have babies, no matter what you think about the matter. *Bloodlines and Breeding*, the great Pureblood pastimes. ‘But I see your point. You are— what you are. *Romantic*, almost.’ Sniv scoffs, Regulus elbows him, gently, ‘I mean it. You want to be listened to and treated *nicely*— I think it’s sweet.’

‘It’s not sweet,’ Sniv replies. ‘I am not sweet. Ask anyone, they’ll tell you—’

‘You *are*.’ Regulus insists, ‘So sweet I’m almost tempted myself, sometimes— If it wouldn’t risk becoming an *absolute disaster* and losing me the closest thing to a best friend I have. Especially once I have to get married— the price of Sirius’ little snit, that— I just don’t think you’re the type to want to take up with a married man, are you Sev? You actually *believe* in all that nonsense in the wedding vows. Love, honour— Well. Maybe not *obey*.’

Snivellus looks uncomfortable, ‘Can we stop walking about *me* now? We did come here so you could—’

‘Dance, drink, and defile myself?’ Regulus interjects, finally getting the attention of the makeshift bartender and getting two beers, squeezing back through the crowd and towards a relatively more sparse spot in the corner of the room before he hands one so Sniv and keeps the other for himself, turning to him with a casual, ‘Sorry lover-boy, you want one you’ll have to buy one yourself— Actually. You have been awfully quiet. Just happy to admire from afar?’ He never knew quiet, solemn little Regulus Black could look so saucy. ‘Your name would be a start, at least. I’m Reg and my lovely little companion is Sev. As I said, I’m taken— though I haven’t decided who’s taking me as of yet. Or being taken themselves— Not *you* I’m afraid. You seem a little too— *Neat and tidy* is one way to put it. *Like daddy’s got a title* might be another. Though I think what I really mean is *you look like the pricks I grew up with*— and I’m afraid I’m after something a bit more—’ grey eyes leave his face to examine the Muggles passing by with predatory intensity, ‘*Different—*’ those same eyes snap back to his face, ‘But, again, as I said, if you’re a good boy Sev might keep you company for a while—’ something, *someone*, must catch his attention, because he trails off, face turning to watch one of the Muggles across the room, before taking a deep swig of his beer and declaring, ‘Gotta dash,’ starting towards whichever Muggle he’s chosen as he does.

‘*Reg—*’ Sniv yelps, catching his sleeve.

‘*Sev,*’ Regulus sighs, looking a little annoyed, before that annoyance turns into a conciliatory smile, ‘I’ll let you know if I’m leaving with anyone, like I said, and you can go home if you hate it, like we agreed—’ grey eyes once more flick to his face, ‘And, if it’ll make you more comfortable, *you* can let *me* know if you’re leaving with someone too, ok?’

‘O-Ok,’ Sniv replies, hesitantly pulling his hand back. ‘Have fun?’

‘Will do,’ Reg replies, before disappearing into the ever-thickening crowd that might be on some kind of dancefloor, or might just be people dancing wherever they stand.

The two of them stand in silence— Well. Stand surrounded by *sound*, but in their own bubble of personal silence— for a minute, Sniv fidgeting and unable to meet his eyes, before taking a deep breath, visibly gathering himself, and looking up— *Oh—* No. *No.* Sniv’s eyes aren’t *pretty*— No matter that they’re the darkest eyes he’s ever seen. And they’ve got that long, almond shape— but not *pretty*— ‘Ignore Reg. You can go if you want,’ the man says, which isn’t what he expected.

‘Ah,’ he blurts, not sure why he suddenly feels so *nervous*. ‘No. Ah— *No.* I’d like to stay— If that’s ok?’ *Why* though? He knows enough now to be pretty sure neither Regulus nor Sniv really want to be Death Eaters— which is— *Odd*, to say the least. Unexpected, certainly— and what he really should be doing is— He doesn’t know. That’s the thing. *Doing something about it* is what his mind tells him, *being the hero, rescuing them both.* But *how?*

Surely if they really want to be rescued they’d rescue themselves. They even talked about going to Dumbledore— which Sniv had immediately dismissed because he didn’t think Dumbledore would help him. But Dumbledore *would* help him— *wouldn’t he?*

Well— If not Dumbledore, then *he* would, at least. He could take them in, give them somewhere to stay, somewhere to hide— but they were never going to come to him for help, were they? And if he reveals himself as James Potter right now Sniv will either start a fight or run off, definitely think this is some kind of prank, and be unlikely to accept the offer of assistance at face value.

He needs to— Well. The only thing he can think is that if maybe he spends some more time with Sniv, *pleasant* time, time in which he doesn't hex the other, or dump him or his possessions in the lake, or say anything horrible, or *any of it*, really, he might be able to convince the guy at the end of the night to— to— *Do something*. Or something else, some better idea, might occur to him. Or he might hear something that makes him change his mind. Or—

Or—

For some reason the idea of Snivellus— this Snivellus, this Snivellus that doesn't seem to want it, and doesn't seem all that *Dark*, and just sort of seems like a young man, a *nervous* young man— ending up with the Dark Mark scribed onto his inner arm fills him with a sense of *wrong*.

Sometimes, when he does something he really shouldn't do— in the past usually to Sniv, he has to admit— he gets this feeling like he knows he's lying to himself with whatever excuse he's telling himself for why he's doing whatever it is. He has that feeling now— he just doesn't know *why*.

'Um— Ok? If you're sure that's what you want?' is Sniv's strange, insecure reply. It's funny, Sniv usually comes across as so— *confident* is the wrong word, but maybe *aggressive*, but now he's a little timid and a lot nervous and— 'What is your name, by the way? You never said.'

'Oh!' *Shit, what's a Muggleish kind of—* 'Martin!' Well, he just named himself after *Martin Miggs*. He just hopes Martin is a Mugglish enough name Sniv won't immediately associate it with the comics.

'*Oh Martin,*' Sniv echoes with what is almost a *playful* little smile, but before he can correct him back to just *Martin*, the man adds, 'Do you want to dance?'

What he means to say is *no*, but strangely what comes out is, 'Yes.'

Sniv looks surprised at that, which is funny since the man is the one that just asked him. 'Oh — I'll just—' Sniv raises his beer to his lips and takes a deep pull from the bottle, face scrunching up as he does. 'Well, that tastes like someone's already drunk it,' he mutters, glaring at the bottle with betrayal. 'Bloody *piss weak*— Trust Reg to buy shit beer, toffy little bastard—' Sniv then flinches, blushes, peering up at him from behind long, sooty lashes, 'Sorry. I know. *Dancing*, I did ask— just let me finish this first or else it'll be like dancing with a *plank*. Or at least that's what Reg and Cissa say—' a tiny, awkward shrug of one narrow shoulder, 'Sorry. I'm not very good at this. I don't do this very— Well. I just *don't do this*.'

‘It’s alright,’ he replies, *fascinated* by this view of a Snivellus he’s never seen before. *This must be what he’s like when he’s not so—*

*Kicked dogs bite.*

He can remember his dad saying that about Padfoot, particularly when they were younger, before Sirius had fled his family and gotten disowned. They’d have these awful fights sometimes, and yes, they’d both start it, but Sirius would continue them long after he’d had enough, and say things you just shouldn’t say to a friend, especially not your *best mate*—because there’s a part of Sirius without limits, a part that doesn’t understand when enough is enough, when something is pushing things *too far*. Case in point trying to feed Snivellus to Moony, or whatever it was Pads intended. They’ve never really talked about it. He’s never really wanted to know. He wants it to have been a joke, an attempt to scare Sniv, but he’s afraid it was more. That it really was *attempted murder*. Because Sirius was never taught any better, the house he grew up in was— *Vile*, really. Cruel. Heart-breaking. So he’s had to *teach himself* how to be good, and sometimes he gets it wrong, and sometimes when he’s angry he does and says terrible things, things that would have him swearing he never wanted to see the bastard again, that their friendship was over, that no one who really cared for him could speak to him like that— and he’d inevitably write home about it if he was at school, or complain to his parents if he was at home, and his dad would urge him to remember that Sirius might not have meant what he did or said and that *Kicked dogs bite*.

Maybe Sniv has always been another *kicked dog*.

He watches with mild concern as the man gulps down the rest of the beer, before placing the empty bottle on the nearby window ledge. He looks nervous again, Sniv, shuffling a little closer and then just standing there, narrow shoulders up, a frown between his dark brows, ‘How do you want to—?’

‘Dance?’ he glances around at the Muggles surrounding them for guidance, seeing some sort of flailing in place, some moving with better rhythm, eyes on their partners, but with minimal actual touching, and others pressed in close and grinding against each other. It’s all a bit different to most of the dancing he knows, but most of the dancing he knows is terribly formal and only intermittently exciting. His eyes catch on two men that look like they’re pretty much having sex standing up on the dancefloor— Ok. Maybe that would be a bit too much. ‘Let’s just—’ he begins, starting to shift his body a little to the music. If they keep a little space between them and just kind of dance like a pair of Muggles it should be alright, shouldn’t it?

Sniv watches him for a moment, which is horribly embarrassing, before starting to copy his movements. It’s a little awkward at first— especially as dancing like this goes against years of excruciating dance lessons all designed to show him off to advantage at Pureblood functions he has never enjoyed, and at which he has, on more than one occasion, been forced to dance with Bellatrix— back when she was a *Black*— and suffer through her very deliberate attempts to impale his feet on what had always seemed like the *deliberately sharpened* heels of her alarming stilettos. It’s also awkward because Sniv is awkward, his movements small and contained, kept close to his body— but at the same time, awkward or no, he doesn’t want to stop.

He would rather be dancing awkwardly in an overly warm, overly crowded, overly *loud* room, with Snivellus and a bunch of bent Muggles, than go home and have another fight with his wife.

After a while Sniv's movements seem to relax a bit, and he's not sure if it's the beer, or if it's just Sniv getting more comfortable, but once he is more comfortable all of a sudden those little jerky shifts start to become more graceful. A lot more graceful. That particular kind of grace that comes with a long, slender body and long, slender limbs.

Every now and then Sniv shoots him a shy smile and—

And—

And some random man, some Muggle he's never seen before in his life, is suddenly behind Sniv, grabbing onto his hips and grinding against him along to the music. Sniv startles, freezes, black eyes going *wide* and *frightened*— and before he's thought it through he's yanked the other out of the interloper's grip and put himself between them, getting right up into this man's face and snarling, 'A gentleman *asks* first.'

The man blinks at him, bleary with alcohol and who knows what else, and he gets the impression the man didn't mean any harm, but he can't get that look on Sniv's face when he was grabbed out of his mind. 'Sorry mate,' the bloke says after a moment, hands up, 'Didn't know he was taken. No harm meant.'

'Yeah, well *bugger off*,' he snaps, unimpressed.

'Touchy,' the bloke breathes, but obviously he doesn't want to start anything, or ruin his own night, because he's soon bobbing along to the music as he drifts away from them.

'You alright?' he asks, turning back to Sniv, a Sniv who is looking at him with wide, *soft* eyes. Fuck they are *pretty*.

A nod. 'Yeah, he just— he *startled* me. Most of the time if someone grabs me it's to hur— Sorry,' Sniv grimaces, face crumpling in on itself, 'Sorry. You should— I have no idea why you're with me. You should go find someone else. I'm— You seem— You seem like *Potter*, almost, but a *nice* Potter. *Cool*, you know, and I'm—' The guilt is a cutting thing, sharp and heavy in his chest. A *nice* Potter. Hah. If only Sniv knew. He makes noise, not quite sure what he's even trying to say, but trying to convince Sniv he's happy spending time with the other, but Sniv isn't listening, 'I need a drink. I need a drink and a smoke and to get out of here. I never should have come. What was Reg thinking, inviting *me*? He knows I always ruin everything like this. I'm no *fun*. Too serious. Too *weird*—'

'I'll buy you a beer!' he interjects, trying to break up what sounds like a spiral of self-hatred. Like Padfoot, when the fight's over and he realises what he's said, done, and starts going on about how *Dark* he is and how he's no good and how none of them should be his friend. This though— this isn't even something Sniv *did*. This is more something *he* did. A lot of things he did. 'A beer, and I'll get myself one, and then we can go outside for a bit so you can have a smoke away from everyone, and if you still feel like going home once you've had a bit of fresh air then you can go. I'll even go tell your friend for you.'

Sniv still looks miserable, but he also looks so *grateful* it makes him feel *sick*. ‘Thank you, Martin. That’s so— that’s so *kind* of you.’

*Merlin’s Beard, he is a **bastard**, isn’t he?* Ok. Ok. ‘Keep close to me,’ he tells Sniv as he starts towards the bar, or whatever it is, thankful he always keeps some Muggle currency on himself because of the mainly Muggle neighbourhood in which he lives. *Oh*— he glances back to check and his assumption is right, Sniv is holding on to the back of his shirt so they don’t get separated in the press of people.

*He does not know how he feels about all of this.*

One of the benefits of being very tall— and, in this case, *reasonably handsome*, though usually he’s also *very* handsome— is that it’s easy to attract attention. People have to go out of their way to ignore you, and if they’ve got no reason to it’s a good way to make sure you are, for example, served fairly quickly. Two bottles of beer of a brand he’s never heard of before are easily acquired for not very much Muggle money, as far as he can tell, from the cheerful, glitter covered woman behind the plank making do for a bar. She cracks them open with her bottle opener— an odd, interesting thing to see for a man used to using his wand for such things, then hands them over.

Carrying both he heads for the door— the front one, as they haven’t made it much further into the house and he’s afraid to try, leading Sniv along by the grip the man still has on him. Muggles they pass eye him over appreciatively— and *Sniv*— that’s the other thing he sees. He gets eyes, which he’s used to, but so does the man behind him, and when he turns a few times to check he sees some of those eyes lingering on Sniv’s skinny rear.

*Hungry*, the glances there. Hungry when looking at him too, but he’s used to it, and funnily minds it less than he does those dark gazes on the other man. *Is he feeling **protective**? Of Snivellus?*

They make it out onto the street, but there’s so many people milling about and nowhere for any privacy, stillness, that he decides to try the back garden, leading Sniv around the side of the house— and past a fair few Muggles that have also been looking for privacy, but less to calm down and more to— Well. He tries not to look. Not to stare at bare arses and lust glazed faces. The backyard’s not much better— in fact the backyard looks like it’s about ten minutes away from turning into an *orgy*—

‘Maybe we could try next door?’ Sniv suggests, leaning in to speak into his ear. ‘The yard at least. I don’t think I want to go into the house, even though it did look abandoned. I suspect some people will already be around there, looking for privacy, and I’m not exactly looking to end up—’ he trails off, waving vaguely at everything around them.

There’s a hole in the fence, a hole that people are already taking advantage of, so they slip through into the overgrown space beyond. Sniv wanders a little way in, towards a rusty cast iron bench seat that looks like it was once part of some attempt at something ornamental at the far side of the garden, taking a seat and gazing up at the dark house with its broken windows and the sound of laughter and moans coming from within. ‘I hope no one’s squatting here,’ the man muses as he fishes out a pack of cigarettes, ‘Not sure I’d like an orgy breaking in if I was trying to sleep.’



He declines the cigarette Sniv offers him as he takes a seat next to the man, handing over one of the beers and taking a sip of his own, feeling his own face scrunch up like Sniv's had. Somehow it tastes both watery and acridly bitter. Nothing like the kind of beer he's used to—even when he's simply ordering in a pub and not drinking from the supplies the house elves send over from the little brewery at Home.

They sit in silence for a while—or as much of a silence as is possible, considering the noise. It's—*strangely nice*. Except the longer he sits with Sniv the more curious he gets. Curious about all of it, but for some reason particularly curious about, 'This Malfoy bloke you and your friend were talking about— Is he your boyfriend or something?'

'What?' Sniv splutters, 'No, of course not.'

'Do you have a boyfriend?' he doesn't think Sniv does, not from what Regulus was saying, but you never know. Sniv did manage to keep the fact he's bent from the entirety of *Hogwarts*— which is saying something for his secret keeping capacities. Though the fact he was probably afraid of getting tormented for the fact would have helped there— Homosexuality is one of those funny things, most Purebloods don't give a shit, as long as people marry and have kids, whilst the Blood Purist lot tend to think of it as a degeneracy that implies something wrong with someone's breeding— Padfoot, unfortunately, can default to that position, though he doesn't stick to it when called on it. Then there's Halfbloods and Muggleborns, and far too many of them are far too hung up on such things. The group that seem to care the *least* are those really, really mixed families, Magical enough to avoid Muggle hang-ups, and not able to claim a pedigree to be concerned about.

Sniv shakes his head, then, looking at him through long, dark lashes, bottom lip sucked nervously between the other's crooked teeth, '*Do you?*'

He shakes his head. It's true, he doesn't. Now, if Sniv had asked about a *wife*—

'Why don't you?' the other man asks before he can parse whatever it is he's feeling about the thought. 'Have a boyfriend, I mean? You seem like the kind of man who should, you know, nice, kind, *considerate*—'

*Funny, Sniv didn't mention handsome.* 'Why don't you?' he counters, not really wanting to think about the fact he's kind of, maybe, flirting with *Snivellus* when he's married to *Lily*. His *dream girl*. The one he promised himself he'd never cheat on.

Sniv blurts out a laugh, 'You've seen me, right? Crooked nose, crooked teeth, *ugly*, and I stink, and I'm weird, and people just— People don't like me. Why would I have a boyfriend?'

Oh— Something sinks in the heart of him, something wretched. *No*. 'No!' he snaps, suddenly angry, though not with Sniv, even though the other draws back from him at his tone. *Fuck, he's fucking this up*— 'You're *not* ugly. You're really not—' and, ok, Sniv is a little *weird*. Serious and sullen and withdrawn and intense and defensive and *smarter than pretty much everyone else in their year*— but that's not actually a *crime*, is it? Even being a little bit *Dark*— Because Sniv might have known more curses than anyone else when he got to school, but he never, *ever* used them *unprovoked*— Great. He feels like more of a bastard than ever.

‘There’s no reason for people not to like you. No reason for you not to have a boyfriend—’ and he can’t say it, but he thinks to himself, *no reason for you to have to join Voldemort just for a place to belong*.

‘I still *stink* though, don’t I?’ Sniv mutters. ‘You didn’t say anything about that. I suppose you couldn’t bring yourself to lie—’

‘You don’t *stink*!’ he snaps, leaning in close, too close probably, and taking a big, obvious *whiff* of the other’s scent. He means to say *see*— whether or not Sniv actually does smell— but he really, really doesn’t. He smells a bit like beer and a bit like tobacco smoke but his own, faint, scent is still distinguishable. It’s not really describable. Sniv doesn’t smell like vanilla or spice or cake or anything, he just smells like a person, but a clean, healthy person. A *good smelling* person. The kind of human scent that makes him want to bury his face against naked skin, throat or chest or the nape of a neck or the warm flesh of a bare thigh or behind a knee— and in there, a darker impulse, to shove his face under arms or between someone’s legs. He takes another whiff, another, getting closer, closer, until his nose brushes Sniv’s silky hair. Sniv gasps.

Sniv’s lips are soft, open enough that it’s easy, too easy, to slip his tongue in as he presses his mouth to the other’s, to lap it delicately at the space between, to taste— to *taste*—

A soft noise. A shudder running through that long, lean form. His beer drops from his hand, unimportant, he needs that hand, he needs to— *warm*. Sniv’s body is so warm. His waist so *tiny* as he brackets it between his hands. *As small as Lily’s*.

Slender hands on his shoulders, pushing at him, and at first he pushes back, tries to deepen the kiss, but Sniv’s lips are pressed shut and he’s trying to turn his head and— and— *He is not a brute*, he reminds himself of that. Or at least *not that sort of brute*. He’s never forced anyone. Isn’t going to start now, not to *Sniv* of all—

Oh. Oh. Merlin’s Beard. He just kissed *Snivellus*.

**Severus.** Severus.

He should at least have the decency to use the man’s *real name*—

‘I’m sorry,’ he says, soft, against Severus’ lips, meaning both for the kiss and for *everything*.

‘No, it’s—’ Severus whispers back, and when he pulls away enough to see the other’s face he sees him bright red and nervous looking. ‘I’ve just never— No one’s ever— I mean, *Malfoy*, but I’ve been dodging him, so no one’s ever—’

‘Was that your first kiss?’ he breathes, startled. *First kiss*. He stole Severus Snape’s *first kiss* —

A tiny nod. He should feel bad. He should feel *awful*. Kissing Severus. Stealing the man’s first kiss without so much as a *by your leave*. Kissing someone else when he’s *married to Lily* —

But he feels alive. He feels *alive*— Alive in a way he hasn't in months. He feels here. He feels present and like he wants to stay present and stay kissing Severus and never, *ever* go home again.

*He's been so fucking miserable.*

'Can I kiss you again?'

Black eyes widen— and *why did he ever think Severus was ugly?* What was wrong with him? Didn't he have eyes? *Pretty*— lovely and long and lean and— just *pretty*.

A brief frown, the look of a man considering something, dark eyes flicking down to his lips and then up to his eyes— '*Eat, drink, and be merry*—' Severus breathes out, before a sudden nod. 'Yes. Yes, you can kiss me again.'

He's not about to wait and see if the man has second thoughts. He leans in, starting off gentle, one hand coming up to cup the side of Severus' long face— his skin is soft. Strangely soft. No hint of stubble— and that feels nice, as does the hair— as silky as it looks— and the man's tentative little mouth.

There's only so long he can fight himself.

Soon he's deepening the kiss, humming along in pleasure when Severus responds— unstudied, *virginal*, but willing— and then that pretty mouth is opening, admitting his tongue, and then— hands once more on Severus' waist, and he wants, he *wants*, and he's strong, athletic— he may not play Quidditch anymore but he's taken to running in the mornings to try and still his racing thoughts, his breaking heart, and he's been running a lot— and he still does his weights, not wanting to lose condition, especially if he does end up on the front line against Voldemort, so it's so, so easy to tug and lift and pull Severus onto his lap. Especially as the other is so light, bird boned with barely any flesh on him.

Sev gasps, and he fucks his tongue *in* as the man does, and— Oh— Oh *Merlin's Beard* the other feels good in his arms. Good on his lap. *It's been too long*— He and Lily— They still fuck, but she doesn't want all the petting, all the kissing first, all the foreplay. Let alone to just spend hours necking on the sofa like they used to. Or just holding each other. Sleeping curled up together. It's almost *angry*. All the sweetness, all the *intimacy* gone. Now it's her riding him, or him behind her, because she always tried to squirm out of missionary, and he's taken to letting her without protest. The last time they did do it with her on her back beneath him she'd looked at him like she wanted to *bite him* the entire time. And not in a good way.

Sev's hands land tentatively on his shoulders, fluttery and delicate and— *why is that doing it for him?* Fuck, he doesn't know, but it *is* —the thought of touching Sev where no one's touched before, *how* no one's touched before— He never thought he was the type to get off on conquering virgins— not like Wormy— who's vocal about it— or Moony— who isn't, and who they'd tease, like they tease Wormy, except they know Moony worries it's a *werewolf* thing and not just a *pervert* thing, so they leave him alone about it. Personally he's always liked his girls with a bit of experience, at least with experience with their own bodies, if not with another bloke.

He's never wanted the *responsibility* of it all, of having to teach them about themselves and what feels good— because that stuff's important to him. Girls aren't just a thing to fuck, he wants them to get off too— and he's always been scared to muck it all up— especially as his cock's kind of proportional to the rest of him— which means that, even though it's not something to write to the record books about, he tends to get a fair deal of awe from anyone who sees it. But the way the blokes look at it and the way girls do also tends to be very different, and the catcalls and impressed bullshit from the boys at school may have been flattering, but the apprehension on the face of girlfriends, especially the less experienced ones, was not. At least he now knows what to do with it, and how to make things easier for anyone who takes it— which means he doesn't think of it as the *menace* he did when he first started messing around with girls.

The cock in question's hard where it's pressing against Sev's body, and he can feel a matching hardness pressing against him. A cock. Some bloke's hard cock is touching him. Is hard because of him. *Snivellus'* hard cock— and he doesn't mind. He thought he'd mind. But he doesn't. It's— it's *hot*. He made Sev hard just like Sev's making him hard. He gives Sev a tug, pulling him in closer, shifting forward on the bench himself so he can line them up better, so he can grind his cock up against the relevant parts of the body on his lap.

Sev gasps, wrapping his arms around his shoulders and clinging on, hips squirming back a little— and this is good. This is good. He's going to cum in his trousers grinding up against Severus Snape in the garden of some abandoned Muggle house and it's the best he's felt in *weeks* and—

'I've got a room,' Sev breathes against the side of his face, 'It's not that far from here if you want to go there. We could be more *private*.'

*A room—*

*Does he want to fuck Severus Snape?*

Yeah, actually he does.

He grinds up a little, deliberately, to make sure Sev knows how much he really does like the idea, before answering, 'Yeah, that sounds *amazing*.'

Sev lets out a shaky breath, 'O-oh—' and then, '*Oh!* I have to go tell Reg before we leave,' they both glance towards next door, where things are getting even louder. A tiny frown crossed Sev's face, 'I should tell him he should leave soon, too, before the cops show up—' dark eyes flick back to his face, a sad smile there, 'It's not even illegal anymore, but they still can't help themselves, can they? Harassing people— though I suppose everything's getting a bit loud. I don't know who it would be bothering around here, though— squatters mainly, I guess. This whole street's going to be knocked down soon— It's not about the noise though, you and I both know that. People are so fucking *cruel*.'

'Yeah,' he breathes. They are. He is. *Has* been—

He helps steady Sev as the other climbs off his lap, but then he finds he doesn't want to let the man go, he makes himself stand though, instead of trying to pull Sev back to him, even if

he keeps his hands on the man after that. At first just a hand low down on Sev's back as they cross to the hole in the fence, but once they've climbed through it and into the busy yard next door and Sev *hesitates*, obvious anxiety briefly crossing his face at the idea of pressing back into the crowd, he moves behind him, wrapping his arms around that tiny, *tiny* waist, feeling big and strong and *masculine* as he does, even though Sev is a man and roughly his height, and then nodding at the house itself. 'Shall we?'

It should be awkward, moving with him wrapped around the other, but because they are pretty much the same height, and that height is *tall*, and because Sev is lovely in his dark, exotic way, and he is handsome— even if not as handsome as he usually is— and, possibly, he might just be radiating a kind of smug possessiveness backed up by the confidence that comes growing up with the family name *Potter*— it's actually not that hard to move through the crowd. To press in through the back door and make their way deeper into the crowded house, searching for Regulus.

His cock is hard though, where it presses, rubs, against Sev's little arse— and that gives him thoughts and that gives him ideas and he's half trapped in a glossy, heady fantasy of that last year at school, after Gryffindor won the Quidditch cup— in no small part because of him— and this time, instead of Lily waiting to give him a sweet kiss and congratulate him for all his hard work, he's got Sev waiting, and he curls his arms around the other and kisses him deep and then carts him off to fuck him in the middle of the Quidditch pitch in front of everyone to show them all this greater *triumph*. To show them that by being sweet and considerate, by being a better kind of *James Potter*, only James Potter, not Lucius bloody *Malfoy*, he's managed to tame the prickly beast. The great Slytherin beauty— and that's what he's imagining when Sev spots Regulus.

It takes him a moment to shake himself out of his fantasy to realise what he's seeing, because part of his brain does rebel at the thought of Regulus, *Padfoot's baby brother Regulus*, being the man wrapped around that very large and very muscley Muggle and grinding against his arse in something that could— *very* generously— be called *dancing*, another Muggle, dark skinned, short and slender and wearing a short and sparkly dress, caught under one of Regulus' arms and sort of grinding against his hip.

'Walburga would shit herself,' he hears Sev murmur to himself. *Yeah*— or have a stroke. He feels a giggle rise up, though he bites it back down. *Can't let Sev know who he is—*

After a moment's hesitation, and obvious steeling himself, Sev guides them closer, bellowing out, 'Reg!' when they might just be in hearing distance.

The man looks up from where he's been mouthing the skin between the large— and shirtless — Muggle's shoulder blades. A smile when he spots who'd calling for him, 'Sev!' and then, 'Sev, this lovely young lad is Terrance— *Terry*— say hello Terry—'

Terry, bleary eyed and looking rather besotted with Regulus, manages to do so— and wow, that is a big Muggle. That is a *huge* Muggle. That Muggle is both taller and wider than him. That Muggle looks like he could be a Crabbe or a Goyle— if he wasn't so well proportioned and good looking, anyway. A huge, *handsome*, Muggle— and one which it looks like Regulus is well under way taking advantage of.

‘—And this lovely young lady is Carmen,’ Regulus adds, giving the other Muggle a squeeze. *Pretty*, also, though— and this may just be personal bias speaking— not quite as pretty as Sev. Less tall and slender and exotic looking, and more the kind of pretty that’s to *everyone’s* taste. Inarguably pretty— dark hair a fluff of curls around a small, oval face, with large eyes and a full mouth— and he’d guess that Carmen’s name wasn’t *Carmen* when she was born, and he hopes Carmen’s parents were kind and understanding, and he wonders how Muggles deal with these sorts of things without magic to make everything easier.

He has an aunt on his mother’s side who was named Reginald at birth, and Reginald— being the third of five, and thus not particularly obliged to acquire a wife and children— had become aunt Cordelia long before he was born.

These things do happen— though they happen with easier acceptance from Pureblood parents where there are others to take on the burden of the Bloodline.

‘We’re going to go,’ Sev tells Regulus once everyone has greeted everyone else. ‘Back to mine,’ he adds after a moment.

Grey eyes widen, before a pleased smirk crosses what is really quite a handsome face, he realises. Though one easily overshadowed by Padfoot’s more perfect looks. ‘Good for you, Sev,’ Reg replies, ‘We were thinking of heading out too. Carmen’s got a place nearby,’ he turns his attention back to the Muggle in question, ‘Don’t you darling?’ A nod from the Muggle, who is looking at the two of them with idle curiosity.

‘Talk to you tomorrow?’ Sev asks, and when Regulus agrees they start off towards the front door.

Before they can get far Regulus bellows, ‘Remember, Sev, you’re allowed to stop him if he’s doing something you don’t like!’ and then, ‘And lover-boy, *if you hurt him I will kill you in ways you can’t even begin to imagine!* Understand?!’

‘Got it!’ he bellows back. True, were he really Martin the Muggle he doubts he could imagine what Regulus Black could do to him if he hurt Sev— He wonders when they became friends. He doesn’t remember them being that close at school. ‘He’s very protective of you, your friend?’ he says, tone querying, as they pile out into the warm night air.

‘Yeah,’ Sev says, voice a little sad and a little fond, ‘I wish we’d been friends earlier— Do you want to walk? It’s not that far. Or we could get a cab?’

Either way he’s going to have to let go of the other man, at least for a while— But if they walk they can talk, and at least they’ll be away from the censorious gaze of a narrow minded Muggle cab driver. From talking to Lily, and to Moony before her, he’s really gotten an impression of how different the Muggle world is to the Wizarding world. To think that homosexuality was *illegal* in the Muggle world— and not just for a year or two when a conservative government was making a massive error in judgement, but for *centuries*.

If he’d fallen in love with Sev instead of Lily he could have openly taken him as a lover, and kept him as one, even after school, with the most judgement being the fact he’s *Sev*, then the fact he’s a *Halfblood*, and only finally the fact he was being open about things and not

finding a witch to marry and have a few children before organising an amicable divorce and only *then* striding through the Wizarding World with Sev at his side. There are even ways they could have, essentially, *married*— Though, realistically, as the last scion of the main Potter branch he would have had to have children, it would be his duty— but it's the modern age. He could have simply come to an agreement with a witch of non-objectionable breeding and that would have been that.

'A walk might be nice,' he says, letting go of Sev's body to take his hand instead. 'The weather has been remarkably pleasant recently, and I think I'd enjoy taking advantage of that fact with you.'

Sev's hand twitches a little in his grip, before the man moves to entangle their fingers, before giving him a little tug, 'Well, it's this way, if you want to—'

They start off side by side, holding hands— though he notices Sev moves so that fact is almost concealed in the shadow of the night between their bodies. 'What did you mean by you and your friend— *Reg* was it?—' he deliberately pronounces it like *R-edge* instead of *R-egg* to throw off any possible suspicion, smiling a little to himself when Sev gently corrects him, before he continues with, '— Not being friends earlier? You seem really close, so it's hard to believe you haven't known each other for years.'

'Oh, we have,' Sev replies, 'We were at school together, but we really only became friends in my sixth year, after—' he trails off, a grimace covering his face. *After he and Lily fell out.*

Guilt, again. Sev looks so *sad*—

Trying to distract him he asks, 'This Malfoy, did he go to the same school, or did you meet him through work or something?' It's funny, asking questions when he already knows the answer.

The grimace takes on a disgusted look, '*School*, as you said. He was a year ahead of me. I was in the same year as his *wife*.'

'So, he's married?' to Narcissa Black, in a very expensive, very elaborate ceremony that neither he nor his parents nor any of their relations had been invited to in a very deliberate *snub*. The kind of snub only someone as highly ranked as a *Malfoy* would *dare*— and even then only because the family think they've bet on the right horse with Voldemort. To think, *Malfoys* snubbing *Potters*— what has the world come to?

Sev nods, 'It's more of an *arranged thing* than anything. I think the parents decided— She's my friend too, *Cissa*. Though it's hard seeing her much since the wedding— or at least hard for her to get away without *him* finding out and probably following. She was in my year— Reg in the year below me—' Sev trails off for a bit, and when he glances at him he finds him looking wistful. Eventually the other adds, 'I think things would have been better if we'd all become friends earlier.'

'Did you have a hard time at school?' and isn't that a masochistic question to ask? What will he say, think, do, if Sev brings up the great big *bully*, James Potter?

A small, short nod, then, ‘My own fault, really. Because of how I am, and because I made some bloody *stupid* choices— But there were also these *boys*. They made my life a living *hell* and the teachers, the *headmaster*, none of them cared— Sometimes I’d think they could kill me, just straight out *kill me*, and no one would bat an eyelid,’ *Be careful what you wish for*— It can’t be true. He wants to insist it’s not true. He can remember losing points, so many points, for things they did to Sev— but it never seemed all that serious. McGonagall might have been angry, but most of the rest of them seemed amused, if anything. There was a lot of *boys will be boys* thrown around— and Sev lost points himself, often for just trying to protect himself— though the fact *Protego* was the other’s last choice when he could fling back something *nasty* didn’t help. It makes him feel *sick* now.

‘I’m sorry—’ he begins, hoping he doesn’t give away how much he wants to add *for what I did to you*, but Sev isn’t listening.

‘Not that the boys— and some of the *girls*— in my own house were much better. At least the bloody *Marauders* couldn’t get in to attack me in my sleep, or in the bathroom—’ *Wait, what?* Were the Slytherins going after Sev as well? He never heard anything about it, but— But— ‘I had the wrong *breeding*, you see. Or half the *right* breeding and the other half so *wrong* they were offended by my very existence—’ he blows out a shaky huff, ‘— and I had this friend, my *best friend*, in another House. My House’s *rival* House—’ dark eyes flick to his face, then away, ‘*Public schools*— I imagine you know what it’s like.’

‘Yeah, I do,’ he replies. Only too well, since it was the same school. ‘What about this other friend?’ he asks, even knowing it’s a cruelty, but now he wants, *needs*, to know Sev’s perspective of the breakdown of everything between him and Lily, ‘Why aren’t they out with you tonight?’

A tiny, bitter laugh, ‘Oh, she hates me. I drove her away— *For good reason*, you have to understand. I— I behaved *wretchedly* towards her. I said— I called her a *slur*, in front of everyone, and acted like I didn’t care about her, and tried to become friends with people she *despised*— and it wasn’t just some stupid prejudice of hers. In reality they’re all a bunch of *bastards*— a bunch of bloody *fascists*— I just— I just thought if I was their *friend* they’d stop going after *me*, you know? So I became— Oh, I became so *pathetic*. Crawling and pathetic. Willing to go along with things—’ Sev pulls out his pack of cigarettes and extracts one with a shaky hand, lighting it and taking a deep puff before he can bring himself to finish that sentence, ‘I betrayed my own morals, if you know what I mean? Not that anyone at school would have thought I *had* any morals— but I do, and I betrayed them, and because I betrayed them back then I’m stuck betraying them now.’

‘What do you mean?’ he asks, wanting to know why Sev thinks he’s stuck with Voldemort, why he can’t just *leave*.

A bitter smile is what he gets for his trouble, and the words, ‘Don’t worry about it, it’s my problem—’ then a quiet murmur of ‘I wish I’d chosen *Ravenclaw*.’

‘*Ravenclaw?*’ slips out. *Oh, he can see it.* Sev would have made a *brilliant* Ravenclaw.

Thankfully the other man seems to interpret his slip as just Martin’s curiosity about him and not signs that Martin is not a Muggle after all. Or is, in fact, *James Potter*. ‘One of the school



Houses,’ Sev explains, ‘Me and my friend— the one that hates me— had decided it was the House we wanted to end up in— but she was Sorted before me, and she ended up in the same house as these *boys*, the ones I told you about earlier, the *bullies*, and they’d been so, so *horrible* to me on the train that when it was my turn—’ Sev frowns, obviously thinking of how to explain this to a Muggle, before just barrelling ahead, ‘I had *three* choices, kind of, or at least the Sort— *School* thought I’d do well in three of the four Houses, but one was the same as the *Marauders*, and I was so angry, so *bitter* that Lily had— as I saw it— betrayed what we’d already decided. Betrayed *me*— that I wasn’t thinking properly, and I just had this moment, this *moment* in which I wanted to be in their rival house, out of *spite* of all things, that I ended up being Sorted into it and then the ha— The *person* doing the sorting wouldn’t listen when I tried to get it to sort me into Ravenclaw instead, even though it had just said I’d do well there.’

*Gryffindor*— Sev was almost sorted into *Gryffindor*. Might even have been sorted into *Gryffindor* if he and Padfoot hadn’t— They’d already known each other, was the thing, him and Sirius. They’d met before memory, at various tedious Pureblood functions, and ended up fast friends— much to the horror of their parents. On the train to school they’d met again and just *clicked*, determined to both end up in *Gryffindor*, Padfoot already determined to find a way to get away from his family, him determined to help— and then they’d run into Severus Snape. Small, runty, too skinny, dirty, smelling sour and strange and unwashed, and hostile. They were used, both of them were used, to people pretty much throwing themselves at their feet. They were both sons and heirs of two of the most powerful Wizarding families in Britain— the Potters arguably *the* most powerful, the most influential, the *wealthiest*— and little Severus Snape had just glared and stunk and been unimpressed and Sirius— poor Sirius, all pent up and angry with the world and still smarting from the hexes his mother had thrown that very morning— had wanted some kind of outlet, a way to make himself feel *better*, and he’d gone along, because—

Arguably for the same reasons he’s so good on the Quidditch pitch. For the same reasons he’s always enjoyed going after girls. For the same reasons he’s enjoyed all that fawning attention that being the Potter scion nets him. For the same reasons he’s always enjoyed a physical fight. For the same reasons he enjoys duelling. For the same reasons he dreams about being an auror, bringing down the bad guys, getting all that fame and acclaim.

Humans are predators at the end of the day, and beyond that intensely *hierarchical*. They gravitate towards power structures, and he’s used to being on top. He’s used to *exercising the power* that comes with being on top.

Making Sev look at him with those large, dark, *frightened* eyes had been one thrill, but there had also been the drive to make the other *respect him* as Sev never, ever had. Sev hadn’t looked at him and thought he was innately, by his very *existence*, Sev’s *better*— and that had *stung*. It was like he was *unimportant*— and James Potter had not been bred to be unimportant, especially not in the lovely, dark eyes of some *Halfblood* of unknown origins. Pretty though he may be, and undeniably *powerful*— not to mention far too *intelligent*.

He doesn’t know what to say. He really doesn’t. He feels like he somehow *ruined* Sev’s life — even though he knows Sev played a part in it— mind you, *others* played a part in it too. *Dumbledore* for one— the man was, ultimately, responsible for their conduct and safety when

they were at school. He's always liked Dumbledore. Has known the man all his life. Comes from a *Family* that likes Dumbledore— but on reflection the man had never been fair to Sev, had he? And that had just made it all worse, hadn't it? Knowing they could ultimately *get away* with— He should make his apologies, come up with an excuse, *leave* instead of going home with the other man. Sev would be *horrified* if he knew who he really was— but it's too late now, isn't it?

Padfoot has always teased him about how easily he falls in love. Oh, sure, he's been in love with Lily since— oh, *forever*— but that's never stopped him from falling in love with other girls. Not deep love, just quick, passionate bouts of it. The kind of love that means he can't stay away, can't keep his hands off them, would give them the moon on a platter if they'd let him, would fight the whole world for them, die for them— but, he knows, for all its intensely *romantic* nature, he has also always been a *selfish* lover. Not selfish in the bedroom, *never* that, he has always taken the greatest, deepest, pleasure in making them fall apart under his mouth and hands and tongue, making them cum and cum and cum until they're dizzy and tired and can't walk straight— but if what they wanted, *needed*, most of all was for him to *leave them alone and not pursue them* that was never going to happen. He's covetous, *possessive*— but, he has to admit, only until he *loses interest*. He has cheated on almost every girlfriend he has ever had— and now he's going to cheat on his wife. The wife he swore to himself he would never do such a thing to— and it's not in his best interests, hers, or that of the one he's going to cheat with— but he's not strong enough to walk away.

He is, right now, far too *in love* with Sev to do that.

Right now he wants to go fight *Voldemort* to keep Sev safe. *Personally*.

Right now he— But he can't do most of the things he really wants to do, but the thing he *ultimately* wants to do, which is go to bed with Sev. Touch, take, *conquer*. Worry about fixing things *tomorrow*.

'I am so sorry your time at school was like that,' he says, gently squeezing the other's hand.

Sev shrugs, 'I shouldn't have been surprised. My whole life had been pretty much the same up to that point— I'd just been stupid enough to dream that things would change when I got to school.'

'Well, things can be better now, can't they?' he says, trying to sound encouraging, trying to say *You can escape Voldemort and have a good life* without actually saying the words.

A tiny shake of Sev's head, 'It's all too late now—' then a smile, pretty and sad and wistful and just *his*, 'That doesn't mean tonight can't be good, though. Like Reg. The last *good* night— I'm glad I'm getting to share it with you, Martin.'

*Merlin's Beard*— Ok. Ok, he is going to have to save this lovely man walking side by side with him. No matter what happens. No matter the cost.

'Tell me we're almost there,' he urges, 'It's getting almost impossible not to kiss you.'

‘Just a couple more blocks,’ Sev breathes, looking— Oh, he’s not just *pretty* he’s *beautiful*. How did he not see it before? Slender and elegant and just— just *beautiful*.

The place Sev eventually leads them to is a narrow terrace house with three or four stories. It doesn’t— it doesn’t look a *nice* place to live. It looks grimy and in poor repair, and when Sev lets them in to the dark, mildew scented space beyond the front door— hushing him as he does— and leads him up a narrow, dirty staircase with a broken railing he finds a strange, possessive worry rising in him. Sev shouldn’t be living here, in a dump like this.

It’s a door up on the top floor that Sev finally stops in front of, taking a key out of his pocket and pushing it into a lock that looks scratched and half broken. The room beyond is *tiny*. Barely enough room in it for the cast iron single bed and the battered chest of drawers that has been pushed up close to the window so Sev could add a tall bookcase on that side, towering over it all and stuffed to the brim with books. There’s a narrow strip of floor, barely a foot wide, between bed and the other furniture— and he’s sure, absolutely *certain*, that if there was an earthquake the bookcase wouldn’t even be able to fully collapse, would just tip into the wall above the bed and rain books down on anyone lying below.

It’s horrible. It’s cramped and institutional and there are waterstains in one corner, dripping down from the ceiling, and even though it does have a window, it’s horribly narrow, a little garret window, like this is part of some servant’s quarters, probably divided up even further than they were originally, and— and—

At least it’s *clean*— but that’s a cleanliness in defiance of the nature of the place.

This is no place for the lover of a *Potter* to be living.

‘Sorry,’ Sev says once they’ve both squeezed inside and the man’s locked the door behind them. ‘I know it’s— But things are a bit tight right now.’

‘It’s fine,’ he says, pulling Sev into his arms, ‘*Private*, and that’s the main thing.’

Sev gives him a nervous little smile, and he’s reminded that this is undoubtedly the first time the man has done *this* as well, that he’s a virgin in more than just *kissing*— though he doesn’t ask. Doesn’t say anything. Doesn’t bring it up. Doesn’t want Sev to have second thoughts.

He leans down, presses a gentle kiss to lips that may not be overly full, but are fuller than he ever believed they could be, now they’re not pressed together in a scowl. Sev responds again, opening so sweetly to him, letting him curl himself around the other man and kiss him deeply. Eventually he forces himself to pull away enough to ask, ‘How far do you want to go?’

Some of it, he knows, is like with girls. Hands, mouths, just rutting up against the other person— but there’s also that other act, the one he first heard about in some dirty— and *cruel*, he thinks on reflection— joke of Wormy’s. *That* he imagines you can do with a girl as well, but she’s got to be a very, *very* adventurous one, and none of his girlfriends have been quite so wild. Mind you, he’s never been brave enough to *ask*.

He's thought about it though, sometimes, alone in bed at school, curtains drawn, hand on his cock, imagining fucking into a long, slender body, a tight little arsehole—

Sev looks nervous again, and *pink*, and— and— ‘*Would you fuck me?*’

‘Yes!’ and that was an undignified yelp, Merlin’s Beard, so *embarrassing*, but still, ‘Yes, of course. Yes, *I’d love to.*’

‘Oh— ok,’ Sev replies, like he almost expected the answer to be *no*. ‘Um— *thank you.*’

‘Why are you thanking me?’ he can’t help asking. ‘I should be thanking you. I should be crawling at your feet—’ he glances around, ‘—If there was room for me to fit, which I don’t think there is— in praise and awe that you’d let me even *touch you.*’

‘Don’t be ridiculous,’ Sev tries to snap, but he looks far too pink and far too flattered to really add much fire to his words.

‘I’m not being ridiculous,’ he replies, wrapping his arms righter around Sev’s waist and pressing a light kiss to his lips, ‘You’re really very lovely. Sweet and smart and *pretty.*’

‘*Pretty?*’ the other splutters. ‘Did you leave your glasses at home? I’m many things, but I’m not *pretty.*’

‘Oh, you are,’ another kiss, another— ‘The prettiest thing I’ve seen in a long, long time. Does it bother you?’

Sev looks confused, very, very confused. ‘What?’

‘That I think you’re *pretty*. Does it bother you?’

‘No—’ a shake of the pretty face in question, ‘No, it doesn’t bother me— I’m just *not*. That’s all.’

‘You *are*,’ he insists, then doesn’t add *prettier even than my own wife*, because he doesn’t think Sev would take it kindly, for one, and for two he suspects it’s the old *James Potter falling in love* problem. The problem where the last girlfriend who had seemed so very lovely, whose looks had been exactly to his taste, who he would have described if asked what the most beautiful woman in the world looks like, suddenly seems plain and boring and not very interesting when the new love comes along.

For years, though, even through girlfriend after girlfriend— boy, he really was precocious, wasn’t he? He was, what? *Thirteen* when he asked out Sally Wheedleby— he *still* would have said *Lily* was one of the most beautiful girls he’d ever seen, and she still is, if he thinks about it. She still numbers up there. He would still describe her if asked what the most beautiful *woman* he’d ever seen was— but now Sev’s taken her place as the most beautiful *person*.

‘—You have very peculiar tastes,’ Sev eventually manages, though it’s said in such a soft, sweet voice, and he looks so very *shy*, and—

It's funny. He's always loved girls. *Women*. He's always enjoyed looking at them, touching them, smelling them, kissing them, fucking them. He enjoys everything about them. Their femininity. Their *delicacy*—

But Sev is *delicate* too. Not *feminine*— but also not conventionally *masculine*, and maybe that's it. He can't really imagine wanting to do this with that massive Muggle Regulus was grinding against. People makes jokes, don't they, about *effeminate* men. Jokes that aren't really funny, if he thinks about them— and it's not that Sev is, strictly speaking, *effeminate*, but he's—

Well. *Whatever* it is, it's terribly erotic.

'Can I take your clothes off? I want to see *all of you*—'

'Uh—' Sev splutters, wide eyed, nervous— 'Um— Would—? Would it be alright if I kept my shirt on? My trousers, sure, but— I would really like to keep my shirt on, if that's ok?'

*That means no proper access to nipples*— But that's alright, isn't it? He won't die if he doesn't get to mouth Sev's nipples. Poor thing, he must be feeling so *shy*. The first time he's being touched like this— 'Of course. I don't want you to be uncomfortable.'

A jerky little nod, Sev moving back, away from him then, so long fingers can go for the button of the man's own fly— before Sev hesitates, glances down at his feet, and then awkwardly starts to toe off his boots. *Oh, so Sev wants to undress himself*— But then it makes sense. The man's wand has to be in there somewhere— just like his own is holstered to his side, under his arm. *He should have thought*—

He moves back a little more himself, so he can bend down and untie his own oxfords, doing what Sev does when they're off— which is nudge them under the bed— before he starts unbuttoning his own shirt, careful to undo his wand holster and shrug the whole lot off together in the one bundle. It, and his trousers, end up on the chest of drawers, his socks under the bed, his pants stripped off and folded, placed on top of his other clothes.

A tiny breath of sound, a whisper so quiet he knows Sev meant for Martin not to hear, and if he *was* Martin, a *Muggle*, he may not have understood, but he does understand. '*Scourgify*,' a harsh cleaning charm when used on a body. *Unkind* he can't help thinking. *Sev was just unnecessarily unkind to himself*.

It— It *worries* him, but then he knows he's already getting carried away, already getting—

It's almost the complete reverse, isn't it? The way he wants to treat Sev— Except a lot of the motivation is still the same. He wants Sev's acknowledgement, his attention. He wants to *impress* Sev— but the idea of frightening him, *hurting* him, makes him feel *sick*.

He wants to take care of him.

Part of him, the part he has— not *always*, but since school, and meeting Lily. And Moony, and other Halfbloods and Muggleborns— put aside as some *Pureblood* impulse wants to *keep*

Sev. Lock him up somewhere safe, give him gifts and pleasure, feed him and be adored. It wouldn't work though, Not with *Sev*.

Not *clever* Sev.

No more than attempting anything like that had worked with *Lily*.

Maybe it had all started back then, the *wrong* between them, with his confusion about why she wanted to take an Apprenticeship to become a Potions Master instead of stay at home and just be his wife.

He slips in close while Sev is standing there in just his pants and shirt, reaching out, cupping the man's face and leaning in for a kiss. Sev makes a soft noise, desire there, and pleasure, and happiness and for a second he feels like *crying*, so sorry, so very *sorry*, but the second passes quickly as he decides to focus on the moment.

It's easy, so easy, to usher the other back onto the bed, to kneel down in what sparse space there is and kiss his way up a long, lean leg, to rub his face against soft skin sparsely scattered with silky black hair— Not the hairiest of creatures is Sev.

When he reaches the man's crotch he's faced with a hard cock tenting a pair of pristinely white pants. Impulse, all of it hungry, all of it pulsing through him at once. He should be nervous. *Disgusted*. Instead he *wants* to touch. Put his mouth there. Rub his face there. Breathe in the other's scent—

'You don't have to—' he hears from up above, but he discounts it, ignores it, in favour of nuzzling in, mouthing at the hard flesh beneath white cotton. A gasp. Sev's thighs quiver—he reaches out, curling his fingers around the waistband of the man's pants at his hips and gently tugging them *down*.

Sev's cock is smaller than his own, of course, but not in a way he finds unattractive. It's— *pretty*. Long, but not disproportionately so, with a very slight upward curve, a pair of plump looking balls below, and sitting in a nest of silky dark hair that is more crinkly than *curly*. The foreskin has pulled back a little, revealing his softly rose-pink cockhead, and it all looks — Before thought he's leaning in, lapping his tongue up it from about midway to the head, a deep surge of *satisfaction* rising at the way Sev's hips twitch as he does.

Hands reach for him, but instead of pulling him closer they pull his head away. *Worry*. He glances up, afraid he's moving too fast— but Sev looks pink and soft and not frightened or angry or— 'Please,' the man says, 'I mean— that was *lovely*— but please, I want you to *fuck me*.'

'Don't you want me to suck your cock?' he can't help asking, curious. He doesn't think any man he knows would stop someone on their knees for them like he is right now.

The question makes Sev look awkward. Makes him release his head and bring his hands up so they hover protectively over his chest, near his throat. 'Um—'

'It's ok if you don't!' he rushes to add, fascinated.

‘I just—’ Sev’s fingers flutter a little, and he thinks that awkwardness is becoming shame, and he doesn’t want that, so he tries to settle the other by gently rubbing his leg. ‘I’ve never been all that— I mean, I know it’s *weird*, and you probably think it’s disgusting or something, but I’ve never been all that interested in my— you know— my *cock*. It’s not like it feels *bad* or anything, or like I have an issue with it, or want it gone, it’s just kind of— it’s *boring*? Does that make sense? It’s boring and I’ve always sort of wondered if, you know, being *fucked* was less boring, but no one’s ever— and I’ve— *stupid* of me I guess, *cowardly*, but I’ve never been brave enough to try by myself— I mean, I bought a jar of Vaseline to— but then I couldn’t go through with it. I just kind of felt gross and like a pervert.’

‘You’re not gross, you’re not disgusting,’ he says, trying not to let on how gross and disgusting he feels, finding that so fascinatingly, peculiarly, *possessively* erotic. *Almost entirely untouched*. Wanting a cock, *needing* a cock— It’s like some filthy story, the kind that would make Lily’s face scrunch up and induce her to start lecturing just about *everyone* in hearing distance about sexism and objectification. *The male gaze*. ‘Do you still have that jar of Vaseline?’

Sev nods, ‘It’s in the top drawer. I can get it, if you like?’

‘Yeah,’ he replies, only then considering that he should probably be the one to fetch it, as he’s on the floor between Sev and the drawers, but Sev is already getting to his knees and reaching across the narrow space between the bed and the drawers in question. Sev leans against him, using him to help balance his weight on the rickety bed with its squeaky springs, and that’s— it’s nice. A long, lean flank, the shirt rucked up a little, ‘Ah!’ he hears Sev say, ‘Got it,’ just as the urge to *touch* strikes and he reaches out across himself and lets a hand wander under Sev’s shirt to caress smooth, soft skin— *marred by*—?

‘Sorry!’ Sev yelps, instantly losing his balance. He turns with the reflexes of a Quidditch player that could have gone professional and catches Sev before he can fall in between the bed and the furniture and hurt himself, easing that slender form back onto the mattress before his hands go straight back to that shirt and ease it up enough to expose—

‘*Someone whipped you?!*’ he demands, staring at the few silvery lines crossing from the other’s lower back to upper thighs.

‘Sorry!’ Sev yelps again, grabbing for the end of the shirt and looking almost as if he’s about to *cry*. ‘Sorry! I know they’re ugly. I know they’re disgusting. I didn’t want you to see—’

‘They’re not *ugly*,’ he snaps back, ‘They’re *outrageous*. How dare someone *whip* you.’

‘It’s not from a whip,’ Sev protests, still trying to cover them up— and now he feels like a brute, a monster, so he lets go of the shirt and watches as Sev immediately pulls it back down, ‘They’re from my dad’s belt. That’s all. They’re *nothing*. I really didn’t want you so see. *Sorry*.’

*His dad*— Oh. Oh— *What has he done? What did they all do?* He leans forward, scooping up Sev’s trembling hands and pressing urgent kisses to the back of his knuckles, ‘I’m so, so sorry,’ he breathes out, knowing as he does that it’ll never be enough. ‘They’re not ugly. *You’re* not ugly. I’m not disgusted—’ with Sev, at least. He’s plenty disgusted with himself—

and with Sev's father. *A Potter does not let such transgressions go unavenged*— 'You're lovely. So lovely. You *deserve better*—' than all of it.

After a long, long moment Sev's voice, weak and trembling, asks, 'You're really not *disgusted*?'

He shakes his head, 'I'm really not. *Angry*, yes, but not at you. At *him*—' more kisses, both to Sev's knuckles, and then to the tender skin of his wrists. He rests there for a moment, Sev's skin pressed to his face, before he pulls back to ask, 'Are they why you wanted to keep your shirt on?'

A tiny nod. He nods back. 'You can keep it on if you're more comfortable, but I want you to know I don't mind if you take it off.'

Sev opens his mouth, then hesitates, before saying, 'There's more. Some are *worse*—'

'No matter how bad they are I won't be put off,' though he might just have to tell his mother and get her to find out what Sev's family situation is and what can be done to acquire reparations for damages done.

'O-ok,' Sev manages, before sitting up and raising his shaking hands to the buttons of his shirt, undoing them one by one until he can eventually shrug it off and dump it over the side of the bed. The *worse* is immediately obvious. Little round scars on his upper arms.

'*Cigarettes*,' Sev helpfully explains, touching one, 'Dad again. Mum would—' he trails off. 'Well. It doesn't matter. She's gone. *Left* I mean— she got sick of us so she just— she *left*.'

*Kicked dogs bite.*

Yeah. Sev was a *kicked dog* alright, and they, and *he*, just kicked him more.

'I'm so sorry,' he says again, leaning in and pressing a gentle kiss to the other's tense and trembling lips. 'Do you still want to—?' he asks when he pulls back, 'We don't have to. We can just sit together, if you'd like? Or talk? Or I can go?' *please not the latter*. He doesn't want to go. He never wants to leave Sev's side again.

'I do still want to,' Sev replies, catching his head with one long fingered hand and pulling him in close, 'I don't think I'll ever get the chance again, and I like you. *I really like you*.'

He should ask *why not*. Martin the Muggle would ask *why not*, but he knows *why not* and he disagrees with *why not* and right now he doesn't want to waste time on his stupid pretence.

'Do you want to do it on your back?' surely that has to be possible for two men, 'Or would you feel better on your belly or your knees?'

He should probably tell Sev he hasn't done this before either, Sev probably thinks he has— but he doesn't want to give the man a reason to hesitate, and, anyway, he's heard enough to know how it's done— slick, stretching, be gentle— and he's had plenty of sex with girls, sometimes even with something to help slick the way considering his— *girth*— and has had plenty of practice stretching them— also considering his girth— so it should be ok. It's still all slick, stretching, be gentle.



‘My back,’ Sev answers, ‘If that’s ok?’

‘That’s *perfect*—’ that means *kissing*. He does love *kissing*. It also means he can look down into Sev’s pretty face. ‘Now where did the Vaseline get to?’

‘I think it landed on the floor when I dropped it,’ is Sev’s embarrassed reply.

After a moment’s searching he finds it sitting on its side on the bottom shelf of the bookshelf without its lid— must have bounced— and when he looks up with it held triumphantly in his hand he almost drops it again. Sev is lying back on the bed, *legs spread*—

*Waiting for him.*

He surges onto the bed, and up between those legs to take the other man’s lips in a desperate kiss. Sev curls up against him, wrapping arms around his shoulders and legs around his waist, and for a moment there’s just the sensory pleasure of *touch*. His cock bumps Sev’s and he wants to rub his there, get it sticky, cum all over everything between the other’s legs. A dark, possessive want. Urges to lick and spit and smear himself all over everything, all over the other man. Urges to *claim* and never let go—

But Sev said he wanted to be fucked. Sev said he wasn’t all that interested in having his cock touched— and he wants to give Sev what he wants.

He fumbles with the Vaseline for a moment, finds the top, stabs his fingers into the slick stuff, and sets it aside, still kissing, never wanting to stop kissing Sev, as he brings those fingers to where they’re needed. It takes a further minute of fumbling, Sev jumping at the first touch, then flinching a little at every clumsy one after, until he finally finds the other’s hole, touching it, feeling it twitch, contract, *clench*—

Sev gasps against his lips, breaking their kiss to suck in a deep breath as he circles the tiny furl of flesh, feeling it spasm and imagining—

A little pressure, a little more, and the first fingertip sinks in.

*Oh.*

***Oh—***

Warm and tight and—

‘It feels—’ Sev breathes out.

‘Is it good?’ he asks, worry suddenly surging in him. He wants it to be good. He’s desperate for it to be good— even though it’s only a single fingertip. He feels almost insecure of his ability to please a lover for the first time in a long, long time.

‘I don’t—’ Sev has the sweetest, cutest little frown between his brows and he can’t help leaning in and kissing him there, not even sure why. The man’s head moves as he pulls away, darting up to press a kiss to his lips, before Sev adds, ‘Keep going.’

The finger slides in deeper, and it's different, it is different than with a girl, than pushing his finger up into a woman's sex— but it still feels good, and the way Sev is moving with him, seeming fairly relaxed and unafraid, means that doing it makes him feel *closer* to the other man.

When he's in love he always feels like he can't get close enough to the one he loves.

Lily has always found it a little annoying. She's quite *independent*. Likes her space— She doesn't like the way he wants to sling his arm around her shoulders or her waist or place a hand low down on her back when they walk. She doesn't like the way he always wants to be touching her, sitting pressed close, playing with her hair or holding her hand or rubbing her calves or ankles or feet. She doesn't like the way he wraps himself around her in bed— and she especially hates all his *overprotective, possessive, unreconstructed, chauvinist bloody hovering*, as she puts it.

Not that he really does any of those things anymore. Because things between them have broken down to the point he barely feels the urge. Even sex feels like an exercise in *distance* instead of what he's always liked from it, a way to get *closer*.

He pulls the finger back, pushes it forward again, feels how Sev's body responds, seems to welcome him, just like Sev's mouth welcomes his kiss. He tries to be gentle, he tries to be slow— but his cock is hard and Sev is wiggling against him and, even knowing it might be too soon, he pushes back in with two fingers the next time he pulls the first one back.

Sev twitches, gasps, tight little hole clenching and clenching around his fingers— 'Is this ok?' he asks, 'Am I moving too fast?'

It takes a moment for the other to gather his thoughts, 'No, it's— it's *intense*, but I don't mind. I think I— I think I *like* it.'

A groan slips out, hand pushing forward, feeding both index and middle fingers *in* all the way to the palm— and it's so tight and so warm and so *perfect* and— and he wants to pull his hand away and replace it with his cock, but it's too soon, he knows it's too soon, and it's almost *agony* to keep going, but he does, easing Sev open, stretching that tight little ring of muscle.

Eventually he thinks Sev might be stretched enough, so he gently pulls his fingers out and pulls back to line himself up, 'Tell me if it hurts,' he urges, 'Or if you need to stop.' He doesn't want to hurt Sev. He can't bear the *thought* of hurting Sev.

'O-ok,' Sev replies, looking dazed and glossy eyed and soft and open and so, so different than the boy he went to school with. The boy who might have just been a lie, a prickly, venomous *shell* trying to protect this lovely creature that has already been hurt far too much.

'God, I love you,' he breathes out, hand on his cock, guiding it *in*.

'*What—?*' Sev yelps, and then gasps, back arching, fingers scrabbling desperately against his shoulders as he fucks in. 'Oh *fuck*. Oh— *Martin*.'

‘Is it ok? Is it ok?’ he asks, though Sev seems too overwhelmed to answer. ‘Sev, *darling*, tell me if you need me to stop?’

After a long, *heart stopping*, moment Sev manages, ‘No. Oh God, *no*. Keep going— Please— *please* keep going.’

So tight. So warm. So slick. So welcoming. So *perfect*.

He stays slow, stays gentle, pulling back after an inch or so and then pressing forward again, fucking Sev open with reverent care. The man beneath him seems made for it, no crying, no yelps of pain, no tense muscles or pained breathing— like the worst times with girls, before he knew what to do and how to be careful, the times that meant he would pull out and do his best to comfort and fuss them, hold them if they wanted, make sure they knew the problem was with *him* and not them— and sometimes, even, the *first* times after, if they were tense because they were afraid of his size—

Soon, sooner than he expected, he finds himself pressed in all the way to the root, Sev’s body having swallowed him up with barely a protest. He stops then, waits, gives the other a moment to adjust— touching and petting and kissing as he does, rubbing his hands up Sev’s narrow, too skinny sides, cupping the sparse flesh of the left side of his chest, thumbing a nipple, kissing and mouthing at the skin of his throat—

Fingers curl into his hair, Sev holding him close before narrow little hips push up, as if to take him deeper. ‘*More*,’ Sev breathes. ‘Bloody hell Martin, *move*.’

‘At once, my darling,’ he replies, the words smearing into the soft skin of Sev’s throat. He pulls his hips back then eases them forward, starting a slow, gentle rhythm, and feeling his lover fall apart beneath him.

A tiny handful of thrusts and Sev’s legs wrap around his waist, clenching with every thrust as Sev moves into them, no hesitation there, only pleasure, desire— *How did he get so lucky?*

Why didn’t he know Sev was like this? How unfair it is, because if he’d known the real Sev, and known that the real Sev would take his cock so sweetly, would take such pleasure in his touch— surely he would have been kinder at school? Surely he would have fallen in love with the other sooner, done all the things he does when he is in love, made sure that Sev’s time at Hogwarts was less a torment, and thus prevented the man from falling into Voldemort’s orbit.

*It’s not too late now.* He’s a *Potter* and *Potters* get what they want and he wants—

Well, to make Sev happy and safe and—

*In love with him, just like he loves the other.*

He pulls back enough to gaze into the man’s beautiful face. Sev seems lost in another world, a better world than the one either of them actually live in. Pleasure glazed and happy and open and *real*—

It feels like the best sex he's ever had. It probably isn't, because he knows that the first time he has good sex, sex they're enjoying, with a new lover it always feels like the best sex he's ever had— but this time it feels particularly good. Perfect. *Wonderful*—

Sev is taking each thrust so well, with such obvious, hedonistic *enjoyment*, and those long, slender hands are holding onto his shoulders as if Sev never wants to let him go, and the man's head is thrown back, silky hair a cloud on the threadbare pillow cover, toes curling, little punched out moans slipping free, so obviously riding that *edge*— and all he needs to do is make Sev cum and it'll be *perfect*.

The man's cock is hard between them, hard and rubbing against his belly, smearing sticky wetness into the hair there— *Next time, Next time— there has to be a next time— he'll rub his own cock all over Sev, all between his legs— maybe not his cock, if he doesn't like it, but everywhere else— smear his scent into his skin, then his spunk, and then lick it off—*

He wouldn't mind licking up Sev's own spunk, or the wetness, that sticky wetness— He worms a hand between them, at first just to touch, just to rub fingers over the head of Sev's cock and raise them to his mouth to *taste*, but the man jumps and squirms beneath him at the touch, and it's hot, it's so— So easy to wrap that hand around the other's cock and start to tug.

Sev's hole spasms around him, clenching and clenching the closer the man gets to his peak. 'Martin,' Sev's calling, '*Martin, Martin, Martin—*' and he wishes it was *James*, or maybe *Jamie*, but it's good enough. It means *him* and that's good enough and—

'Oh, Merlin's Beard, *Martin!*'

Sev tips over the peak and the world goes white as he follows after, not realising how close he was, too caught up in the other man's pleasure. He grinds in deep. He squirts his seed, stakes his claim, *conquers*, and—

When he comes back to himself they're both panting, Sev clinging to him, pink faced and sweaty and the prettiest thing he's ever seen. 'You're so lovely,' he can't help saying, 'So very, very lovely—' *I wish I'd seen it earlier.*

A puffed, slightly incredulous laugh, but Sev doesn't protest, just leans up sleepily for a slow kiss as they both shudder through the aftershocks.

He doesn't want this night to end. He can't *bear* the thought of this night ending, of them going their separate ways. He wants to kiss Sev forever. Forever and ever and ever. He wants to cup the smooth skin of his lovely face— a random thought occurs to him, 'Your face is very soft.'

'Hm,' Sev hums sleepily, attention obviously elsewhere.

'You don't seem to have any stubble,' he points out, stroking a finger across Sev's jawline.

'Oh,' the man says, blinking dark eyes at him with a slightly puzzled look, 'Yes, I didn't like it, and I don't want to grow a beard, so I got rid of it—'

A *potion*, probably. He knows there are several for permanent hair removal. ‘Did you also get rid of the hair on your chest too?’ he asks, taking that hand and groping across the smooth skin of the area in question.

The puzzled look becomes a sleepy frown, ‘Well, I only ever grew a few, right in the centre, and I didn’t like them either, so I thought I might as well—’ Sev shakes his head, ‘Is this really that important right now?’

*No, it’s not really*, he’s just absolutely fascinated by everything about the other man. ‘No. Sorry,’ he replies, a little sheepishly. Sev continues frowning at him for a moment, no doubt waiting for other irrelevant questions, before finally relaxing when none come. It’s such a cute look. It makes him lean in and press another kiss to the man’s lips.

After a while he starts to feel sleepy, the kiss becoming slower as Sev seems to be dozing off too. He breaks it, eventually, and pulls back, gently easing his soft cock out of the other man’s body before he shifts to the side, having to rearrange them so they can both fit on the narrow bed. He wraps an arm around Sev, pulls him until his head is resting on his chest—

‘I wish everything was different,’ it’s the faintest whisper of sound, so quiet he doesn’t think Sev meant him to hear. ‘I really like you— I wish this could be more than it is—’

He makes the decision then, he thinks, even though he doesn’t let the thought fully form.

He leans down and presses a kiss to the crown of Sev’s silky head, and lies back, fighting off sleep, knowing there are things he must do before he rests. Sev nuzzles into him, making a soft humming noise, before his breaths start to slow, become deeper, after a little while taking on a slight wheeze as they blow in and out of his crooked nose.

He broke that nose. At least twice he broke that nose. He hopes it’s not crooked because of him, but if it is he’ll hire a Mediwitch or wizard to fix it. *He has to do his best to fix everything.*

For caution’s sake he waits for what seems like an eternity—but is probably only half an hour — after Sev is asleep to act. ‘*Accio wand*,’ he says, a whisper, the only Wandless spell he can consistently cast. His wand floats over to him from his pile of clothes, and the moment it’s in his grasp he points it at Sev, casting a sleeping charm with a graceful flick.

He watches, waits, makes sure it’s taken, before gently extracting himself and climbing out of bed. He casts gentle cleansing charms on both of them, and also the covers beneath, then dismisses his transfigurations, before grabbing his pants and starting to dress.

Perhaps there's another world in which they’d spend the night curled up together in this bed, have breakfast together in the morning, and he’d spend the next days, weeks, months pretending to be Martin the Muggle, courting Sev and trying to gently ease him away from Voldemort’s side— But he doesn’t have the patience for that world.

He has no desire to conduct a covert affair— He never has before. Every time he falls in love with someone new he breaks up with the old girlfriend, almost immediately— though, thinking on it, *does he really want to leave Lily*— his eyes catch on the long, lean form of

Sev's naked body— *whether or not he wants to break up with Lily he can't bear the thought of losing Sev*. Anyway, it doesn't matter. He can work things out later. There are more important things he has to deal with, and deal with them *now*.

The first is that if he were to draw back and try to court Sev slowly the man might end up with the Dark Mark in a moment of his inattention. Sev cannot be allowed anywhere near the Death Eaters, or Voldemort, ever, ever again.

The second is that Lucius Malfoy might pounce on Sev in a weak moment, and while he knows Sev is very much not interested, who knows what his darling might do in a moment of anxiety, fear, and grief. Sev's life is rather too full of anxiety, fear, and grief— and likely to get fuller, the more time he spends with Voldemort's set.

The third is that he and Pads really have to get to rescuing Regulus, as they're rather on a time limit, and once Regulus is rescued Sev will have only Narcissa Malfoy as a friend, and thus may be encouraged into doing something stupid— like taking the Dark Mark— out of loneliness and a need to belong.

So he's just going to have to— Well. Hope Sev forgives him for acting the conquering brute.

Once he's dressed he searches for Sev's own wand in the man's pile of clothing, almost dropping it in surprise when he does. He knows Sev's wand is black, has seen it before— usually pointed at him— but he's never made much of a study of its details. This— This is an *old* wand. Battered and worn in places, made of the blackest wood he thinks he's ever seen, and inlaid at the handle with ivory in a foliate design of incredible delicacy. A *Family* wand, he thinks, of the old type, and if so— he turns it over until he can see the bottom of its tiny little pommel and finds himself looking at an old, ivory inlay of the Prince Family Crest.

*Eileen Prince's son*— it's the only thing that makes sense— and isn't that a scandal that is still being whispered about in Pureblood circles even all these years later. *Eileen Prince* running off with a *Muggle*.

*Merlin's Beard*, he can't help thinking, *He and Padfoot are bloody lucky the mother was disowned and Sev never added to the family tree*. Imagine what would have happened if they'd treated *Augustus* bloody **Prince's** acknowledged *grandson* the way they had Sev. It would be a fucking *nightmare*.

The Princes are *terrifying*.

*Dark* as well. Really, truly *Dark*. So *Dark*, and such absolute *Blood Purists* they won't have anything, *anything* to do with a *Halfblood* of uncertain character like Voldemort— And *powerful*. Not so much powerful by numbers, or absolute wealth, but powerful on the sheer *strength* of the magic of their line, and their absolute dedication to *perfect breeding*.

The Potters may be top of the heap right now, but the Prince Family has a level of influence that could make things very, very awkward if Augustus had ever had a change of heart—

*No wonder Sev said Malfoy wanted to fuck his **Bloodline***—

Bloody hell, Sev's a *prize*, in so many ways. One, for those that don't mind getting a little bit of Muggle in the mix as the price for breeding in the power of the Prince magic, and two—just for sheer—sheer—Lily would call it *celebrity value*. *If Sev had ever let it known at school what he was—*

But then he did seem to suggest the Slytherins knew, and took it poorly—

But, of course, so many of their families would have been made to feel like poorly bred *dirt* beneath his grandfather's imperious sneer—

Oh. Oh *yes*, he can see it now, now that he knows. The colouring is different, darker, *starker*, but Sev has every bit of his grandparents' ethereal grace.

Mama is going to—he doesn't even know *what*. If Sev had been a girl and he'd brought him home as *wife* she would have been *ecstatic*—she never was that happy about *Lily*, though she's tried to be accepting, for his sake.

He gently places the wand on Sev's chest, feeling it hum happily to be back with its Master, and then gathers up the coverlet to wrap around Sev's naked body, before lifting the man into his arms like a new bride. It's stupid. It's regressive and ugly and *Pureblood*, but he can't help but think of all the now frowned upon customs that would have meant he could have taken Sev as lawfully *his*, just by dint of being a Pureblood and Sev a Halfblood.

Hell, there are still customs that could let him keep Lily as a wife while taking Sev as a—Well. *Catamite*.

Sev's so *light*—underweight, obviously, even with his naturally narrow frame. But all that will change now. *Everything* will change now.

He needs somewhere *private*, and he needs somewhere *safe*, and the Potters own a lot of property, lots of options, so eventually he decides on one of their smaller townhouses in Bath, because he likes the place, has fond memories of it, and because he's never taken Lily there so she wouldn't think to look.

The Master bedroom is where he Apparates them, the lighting coming on the moment he appears, the house recognising its Master. He casts a quick cleaning charm on the sheets of the four post Georgian bed before he gently lays Sev down, brushing his hair away from his face and laying a kiss to his lips, before straightening up to face the House Elf his arrival summoned. Ah, it's Posset, the picture of elfish professionalism.

He orders the Elf to guard Sev while he's gone, to summon Mama to deal with things if he doesn't return in the next day, and to get some other Elfs to go around to Sev's flat and pack up anything they find there and put it one of the other bedrooms after they've gotten through the whole, '*What can Posset do for Master Potter?*' bit.

Then another kiss to Sev's lips and he Apparates out.

It's late, dark still, well after midnight now but before the beginning of dawn. He stands on Padfoot's front door and just breathes it in, the cool night air, the scent of the city, feeling the

lack of that tension he's been feeling for weeks, months, ever since it became clear his relationship with Lily was falling down around his ears. He raises his hand, knocks—

Lights come on inside the small, redbrick townhouse. There's the sound of footsteps, then the door being jerked open, his best mate appearing in the doorway, looking dishevelled and disgruntled, dressed in the bottom half of a pair of striped pyjamas and a woman's Chinese embroidered pink silk robe. 'Prongs?' Sirius mutters, frowning blearily at him, 'You know, your wife was around earlier, completely losing her shit—' the frown deepens, then turns into a look of frustrated comprehension. 'Fucking hell, Prongs. Tell me you didn't!'

'Didn't *what*?' he replies, trying to look innocent.

Sirius moves out of the doorway to let him inside, then slams the door shut behind them both, muttering angrily to himself as he stomps through the house towards the kitchen, flicking on the light switch and heading straight for the kettle. 'Didn't *cheat on her*, that's what!' his best mate snaps once the kettle is on the hob, whirling around with those big, dramatic gestures Sirius seems to enjoy making, 'Tell me you did not cheat on Lily. Lily *your one and only*. Lily the one *you could never bear to live without*. Lily your **one** fucking **true love**.'

He gives a little shrug. Sirius makes a high-pitched shriek of irritation, not dissimilar to the sound the kettle will make when it boils, and bellows out, 'MOONY! GET YOUR ARSE DOWN HERE!'

There's a muffled sound of complaint from somewhere upstairs. 'Oh, is he here?' he asks, peering back the way they came, towards the stairs. True, Padfoot is letting Remus stay here, rent free, but the other's often over at the place of whatever girlfriend he has this week—and they complain about *him* being inconstant. Though, he supposes, Remus doesn't cheat on the girls, they just get sick of his inability to be open and intimate with them. *Werewolf neuroses*, he suspects—Also, the disappearing once a month thing.

'MOONY!' Sirius ignores him to continue bellowing. 'I MEAN IT! PRONGS HAS DONE SOMETHING REALLY FUCKING STUPID AND I DON'T WANT TO HAVE TO BE THE GROWN UP!'

There're more noises of complaint, followed eventually by the sound of something landing on the floor, then heavy, irritated footsteps that come closer, until he spots Remus stomping down the stairs and heading their way, looking more than a little like it's actually the full moon right now. 'Don't tell me he cheated on Lily,' the man mutters as he flounces into the kitchen. The man stops, glances at him, then mutters, 'For fuck's sake.'

At that point the kettle starts whistling and Sirius gets distracted making tea, muttering to himself about wanting something *stronger*. Three cups end up places on the kitchen table, the three of them sitting down, him getting glared at balefully by the other two—which is really unfair, in his opinion. It's not like he set out this night *intending* to cheat on his wife—before Sirius sighs, 'So, out with it. How long do you think before you're going to expect us to address an entirely different Mrs James Potter?'

'Lily's going to have his *bollocks*,' Remus adds, sounding disgusted.



It does occur to him, then, that if he was going to cheat on her with someone that perhaps doing so with the *Sev* she misses so very badly— and whose absence from her life sits like a canker sore in their relationship, eating away at it— might go down worse than pretty much anyone other than that horrid little bitch of a sister of hers. ‘Merlin’s Beard—’ slips out, ‘She’s going to fucking *hex* me.’

‘Well, yes—’ Padfoot begins, frown deepening, ‘But the way you said that makes me think— *James, what have you done?*’

‘What do you mean?’ Moony asks, frowning at Padfoot.

‘*Look at him,*’ Sirius snaps, ‘*He’s done something more than just cheat on her.*’

Moony peers at him, ‘I’m not quite sure what you mean— but you’ve known him longer, so I trust you know what to look for.’

‘*Who have you fallen in love with?*’ Sirius demands, ‘It better not be bloody *Bellatrix* or someone.’

‘Of course it’s not *Bellatrix*,’ he snaps, offended at the very thought.

‘But you have fallen in love with someone?’ Remus asks, looking pained. When he nods, a little sheepish, the man mutters, ‘Should take you to the vet and get you *fixed*. You’d think you were the bloody *dog* around here.’

‘Neither of you are going to be happy,’ he says after a long moment spent nursing his teacup, ‘But that’s not important right now. I’m not here because of what I did, or how I feel, but because—’

‘*Who is it?*’ Sirius demands, interrupting him. ‘I don’t even know why I want to know, but I do— I just— I just keep imagining how awkward things are going to get. I only just got used to *Lily*— Whoever it is better not bloody *hate me* the way she does.’

He’s not sure what his face does, but it must do *something*, and something noticeable enough that Remus spots it, a thoughtful frown appearing between his brows, before they suddenly shoot up. ‘*No,*’ the man says. ‘No, I must be losing my mind. Tell me it’s not—’ and then he doesn’t seem to be able to finish the sentence.

Padfoot whirls to look at Remus, then back at him, ‘Not who? Not *who?*’

His face must still be doing the thing, because Moony breathes out, ‘If I’m right, and I think I am— Pads, you won’t have to worry about a new *Mrs Potter*.’

‘Merlin’s Beard! What are you blithering about?’ Sirius yelps, sounding amusingly canine. ‘What’s going on? Who is it?’

‘Fine,’ he sighs, beginning to realise that no planning to rescue Regulus is going to happen until they know. Or at least *Sirius* knows. ‘It’s Severus.’

‘*Severus?*’ Sirius echoes, face entirely blank, before *outrage* erupts across it, ‘*SNIVELLUS?* You’ve cheated on Lily with bloody *Snivellus?*’

‘*Severus,*’ he corrects his friend, sharp, in that tone that Sirius usually listens to. That tone that tells him he means what he says.

Obviously *usually* isn’t *always*. ‘Snivellus? *Snivellus?* Merlin’s Beard, Prongs, *why would you do that? Why would you want to?*’

‘He’s lovely,’ he snaps. ‘Absolutely *lovely*, and we were complete *brutes* to him. We were *awful*. He never did *anything* to—’

‘He’s a little *Death Eater!*’ Sirius shrieks. ‘He was always Dark— and he’s a *pervert*. Weren’t you always going on about how he was chasing your precious bloody *Lily?!?*’

‘He is *not* a Death Eater!’ not yet. Not entirely. Not unless he gets the bloody Mark— and considering Sev is now safely ensconced in his townhouse that’s unlikely to ever happen. ‘So what if he’s a bit Dark? What can you expect, considering his grandfather is very probably *Augustus Prince?*’

‘*Augustus Prince?!?*’ Sirius roars, lurching out of his seat.

At this point Moony, being always at least a little more sensible than the rest of them, grabs their friend and yanks him back into his seat, though the werewolf’s eyes are fixed on *him*. ‘How did you manage it?’ Remus asks. ‘Severus Snape wouldn’t just let *you* touch him, not out of the blue— Have you been *courting him?*’ the *and not telling us* is very audible, for all it remains unspoken.

He grimaces, ‘He may have thought I was a Muggle named Martin at the time,’ he confesses.

His friends stare at him, before Remus gathers himself enough to say, ‘He is not going to be happy if he finds out— No, not happy at all. I think you’d better give up on him. Yes. Yes I do— I think it would be best, for everyone involved, if you pretend it never happened and—’ his face scowling deeper and deeper with every word, until he breaks off into, ‘*Really, James? Pretending to be someone else? What were you thinking?* He’ll never let you near him again.’

‘Why would you *want* to ever touch him again. It’s Snivellus. He’s *hideous,*’ snaps Padfoot.

He snorts out a laugh, ‘You’re blind. He’s *beautiful*— and have the decency to call him *Severus!*’

‘*Beautiful? Snivellus?* You’ve got to be—’ Padfoot begins, only to be interrupted by Moony musing.

‘I’ve always thought that if he was a girl— *and had a less horrible personality*— he’d be rather *striking.*’

‘*Remus!*’ Sirius shrieks. You’d think his animagus form was a *kettle* with the way he’s been going on.

He must still have a funny look on his face, because Sirius, turning to him and no doubt about to keep on shrieking, suddenly stops, face falling into a deep frown. ‘What else have you done?’ he demands. ‘I know that look. It’s not just Snivellus, you’ve done something else you’re secretly smug about but expect other people won’t like.’

‘No, it really is just *Severus*—’ he begins, but when it looks like they’re both about to start interrogating him he adds, because they’ll find out eventually, ‘Though I may have then somewhat, kind of, charmed him to sleep and then *stolen him*.’

‘Stolen—’ Sirius breathes, the comprehension of a *Pureblood* crossing his face. ‘Merlin’s Beard, James don’t tell me you’ve *abducted* Snivellus?’

‘*Severus*,’ he corrects again, as Moony starts spluttering, obviously having worked out what’s happened.

‘*This is one of the most appalling things I think I’ve ever heard,*’ the werewolf mutters after a moment, eyes blank and staring.

‘It’s a *Pureblood* thing,’ Sirius helpfully tells the Halfblood amongst them, before turning a baleful glare on him— ‘Though usually the sort of behaviour I’d expect from *my* Family, or one of the other *Dark* Families, and not a bloody *Potter*!’

‘My behaviour really isn’t that important right now!’ he snaps.

‘Oh, *really*?’ Moony mutters. ‘*You just go and— and— and it’s not important?*’

‘No, it really isn’t,’ he replies, feeling self-righteous. ‘I am aware that Sev will be less than impressed when he wakes up, and I know Lily will be deeply, deeply unhappy, but these are things I can deal with when I have to, *later*— What is important is that Padfoot’s brother Regulus is going to get the Dark Mark tomorrow night—’

‘*What?*’ Sirius shrieks yet again. ‘I knew it. I knew he was a bad—’

He decides to talk over him, hoping he’ll see sense once he gets all the facts, ‘And he really doesn’t want to get it, and from what I heard doesn’t want to even be a *Death Eater*, so we really don’t have that much time to track him down and rescue him before things pass the point of no return.’

Sirius finally, *finally*, shuts up. A look, sad and hopeful and tormented, on his handsome face.

It’s Remus that speaks then, asking him, ‘How do you know this?’

He shrugs, ‘I overheard him and Sev talking about it, talking about how neither of them want the Mark, and how they feel trapped, and like they can’t go to anyone on our side for help—’ he glances at Sirius, ‘That’s not true though, is it?’

‘Of course it bloody *isn’t*!’ Sirius snaps, lurching to his feet. ‘Fuck *tea*, I need some coffee! Prongs, summon one of your Elfs and get them to bring us some coffee! I’ve got to go get dressed! Fuck! I am not letting my *baby brother* end up a fucking *Death Eater*!’

Remus gives him a *look* as Sirius carries on, getting to his feet a moment later, but not before saying, softly, 'I don't think you realise what a mess you've made for yourself, James.'

Please [drop by the Archive and comment](#) to let the creator know if you enjoyed their work!